

ALL THE WORLD TO NOTHING

WYNDHAM MARTYN



W. E. CRISTY



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He grew conscious of her meditations concerning him.
FRONTISPIECE. See page 155.

ALL THE WORLD TO NOTHING

BY
WYNDHAM MARTYN
AUTHOR OF "THE MAN OUTSIDE," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
H. H. LEONARD

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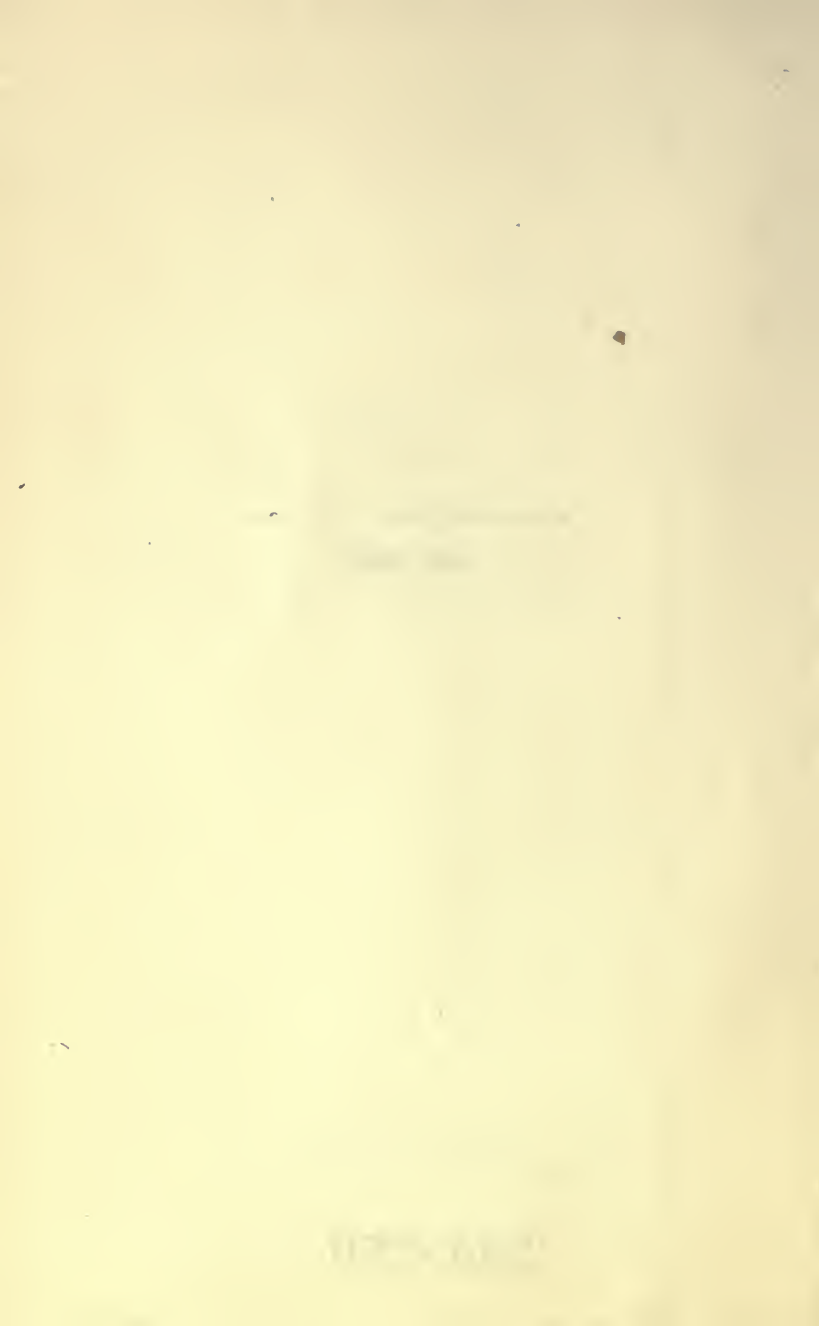
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TO THE BEST FRIEND I EVER HAD

My Wife

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ALL THE WORLD TO NOTHING

CHAPTER I

THE GODS OF MISCHANCE

“Every error in life implies a contradiction; for, since he who errs does not mean to err but to be in the right, it is evident that he acts contrary to his meaning.” — *Epictetus*.

THERE was tense silence in the room as the last card fell. Until then there had been the possibility that the luck which had gone so grimly against Richard Chester might in a measure at least smile upon him and offer the chance of a partial recovery. But the final game found him still the loser and he, alone of the four, had cause to regret the suggestion made idly at luncheon that they should play until dinner time.

Outwardly he seemed the least perturbed of

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them all. Even Wardour Enderby's legal calm was dissipated by his winnings, and young Frankel, with the instincts inherited from a stock-gambling father, was openly elated. The other man, Billy Osmund, richer than them all, swept the few thousands that meant so little to him into his pocket and looked across at his friend uneasily. Companions from the day they met at the preparatory school which sent them on to Yale, he admired Chester more than any man he knew and there were rumors that financially his friend was hard hit.

"We'll give you your revenge whenever you like," he said.

"There's plenty of time for that," his host returned carelessly. "Have a drink before you go."

Osmund poured himself out a stiff whiskey; he was wondering whether Chester was bluffing or not. Hard as flint to most men, he would have gone to any length to oblige one for whom he cared.

Enderby lighted a cigar. "I'm afraid you were rather badly hit," he said.

"You can bet your life he was," Frankel asserted. "He never had a look in all the afternoon."

He prattled on with the joyous assurance of a boy whose play seldom entitled him to win; but his companions in fortune, older than he, sat silent with a sense of constraint upon them. They both suspected that Chester's careless manner concealed disaster. It was true they had been paid in currency and not in checks or notes, but unlike them, he had no longer any property to fall back upon of all that had been left him.

He was a descendant of the famous Colonel John Chester of Port Chester who, torn between loyalty to an absent king and love for his new country, was suspected and denounced by both parties, suffering therefrom confiscation of his immense grant. But at the death of the old Tory the estate had been won back by his son and held with much honor. The present incumbent, Richard's only brother, finding Greater New York creeping about his gates, had sold much of the land to real estate speculators; and trolley lines and small houses and factories were set among the oak woods and green meadows where the Chesters had once followed their hounds.

John Chester, fifteen years his brother's senior, had carefully conserved the family fortunes. That the two brothers were estranged was common

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property, but few had asked the reason. The Chesters were ill men to cross; and the mention of one brother to the other brought a tightened mouth and a look which banished questioning. It was well known that Richard, after coming into his lesser share of the property, had been prodigal in the spending of it. He had taken a big New York theatre for the season, and then as suddenly fitted out a South American expedition for the discovery of that apocryphal creature, the giant sloth. Notoriously ready to gamble on anything and at any stake, his elder brother had not been slow to trace a likeness between him and that Sir Richard Chester who followed his debonnair king into exile at De Zeven Toren and after the Restoration fought for him when with the fourteenth Louis of France he was leagued against the United Provinces.

In the current history of the period there were accounts of this Chester's doings which seemed to point that, although but a simple knight amid great nobles, he was a commanding figure. Sir Richard it was, fired by the story of an unwilling bride and an old lord of Flanders, rescued her and gave her to her true love with a dowry which he had looted from neighboring Brabant. And

it was this same Sir Richard who gamed for three days with the Duc d'Hauteville, marshal of the French king's army, and won all that he had even to his estates in distant Picardy, and then inconsistently sent him back to his camp loaded with presents and free of his debts.

And there were stories of him, too, which may not be related here although the manners of the times excused them. The anecdotes concerning him end abruptly. The writer, an abbé with a pretty taste for elegant writing, evinces a certain disappointment when he relates how the knight met with a beautiful maid, overcame her brother's objections with his good sword and carried her away to his manor in Buckinghamshire, there to live happily until death claimed them. "Thus," wrote the churchman piously, "may Almighty God vouchsafe to woman, the weaker vessel, the power to sheathe the sword of the turbulent man and bring him to a content in His grace."

Old Sir Richard's imagination had been fired at the accounts of the New Netherlands conquered during the first war between Holland and England, and it had been his intention before he met this lady to go to the North as his countrymen Raleigh and Gilbert had to the South;

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but with his marriage his roving habits underwent a change and it was his son, inheriting them, who was to seek the new country.

The American Richard Chester, kin in blood and spirit to the gallant old adventurer, bade his friends farewell with never a suspicion of gloom upon his face or an inkling of the depression that had gripped him. He sat silently for a while when he was alone and then rang for his man.

"Collect all the outstanding bills," he said, "and bring them to me at once. I don't think they amount to much but I want to see how I stand."

When he had finished his solitary dinner, Meadows handed him a neat packet of accounts. Chester looked through them carefully.

"And there's your wages, Meadows," he said. "You haven't been paid for three months. I'll give you a check in the morning."

"I'm afraid, sir," said the man, almost timidly, "that luck's been against you lately."

"Everything's gone wrong," his employer returned. "Why?"

"I am sorry," said Meadows, simply. "I had hoped things would clear up so that I could leave you more happily."

"Leaving!" cried Chester. "You're giving me notice then!"

"At the end of a month," said the man.

Richard looked at him with unconcealed scorn. "So that's it," he cried. "Leaving the sinking ship! I thought you trusted old English servants never deserted. Have I treated you badly?"

"I never served under a better master," Meadows retorted earnestly.

"Yet when things are going badly you gather yourself together and try to land on good ground." He sighed a little wearily. "I don't blame you, Meadows. You've got to look out for your end of it, too."

The man looked at him gravely. There was a certain dignity in his carriage and a tinge of regret in his voice.

"I hope, sir," he said, "I have never seemed careless of your interests."

"I know," said Chester. "I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. I've never had a man half as good as you, but just now I'm on edge and I see nothing for it but starvation or an appeal to my brother, and I'm for starvation every time, if that's the alternative. You'd have had to go in any case but it brought things rather too

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forcibly home when you turned on me and said you must go."

Meadows, five and fifty, experienced in the ways of his world and of the world he served, looked at his employer with genuine affection. A first-class valet and courier, he had been able to choose his master; and ten years before he had elected to take service with this young American for his bright, sunny way, his care-free disposition and dashing outlook on life. For Meadows, timid by nature, conservative by instinct, and a slave of caste, would, had the magic power been offered him, have become a reincarnated Richard. In the decade of his service he had watched the gradual dispersion of his master's fortune; he had seen the care-free disposition changing into a certain suspicious man-of-the-world air, consequent on the disillusioning processes which come to rich and generous men who start life with fervent beliefs in their fellows. For Richard, when once his sympathies were aroused, spared neither strength nor money in what he felt was a just cause. It was a strenuous belief that New York critics were leagued against the greatest actress in the world that led him to take a theatre and let the lady ramble through Shakespeare for a

costly season. He learned when he grew older that she was not even second-rate.

Meadows' voice broke in upon him. "May I ask what you are going to do?"

"I hardly know," he returned gloomily. "Do you remember my Uncle Theodore?"

"I do, sir," Meadows replied.

"Lord! How I loathed that man," Chester said meditatively. "But I'm not at all sure that he didn't form a perfectly just estimate of me."

"I can't agree with that, sir," cried Meadows, hotly. He, too, had loathed Uncle Theodore.

"The last time he came to see me," continued Chester, "I had just bought a gold mine or a silver mine or something of the sort and thought I knew all there was about it. Uncle Theodore had cold, fishy eyes. 'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel,' he told me. It's a quotation from some one or other, I believe, but it's a devilish nasty sentence to have ringing in one's brain, Meadows, night and day — 'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.'"

"It's false," cried the loyal Meadows.

Chester shook his head. "I'm afraid," he insisted, "that Uncle Theodore was a truer prophet than we gave him credit for."

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"But what will you do, sir?" Meadows asked. His employer's words had startled him. That he might be temporarily hard up was no new thing; but this talk of settling bills and starving, filled him with anxiety.

Chester smiled deprecatingly. "I don't want to seem to boast," he said, "but I had thought of working."

"At what?" demanded the man.

"That will settle itself," returned Chester with something of his old airy manner. Meadows noted a return of the gay, boyish manner which had fascinated him ten years ago. "New York is big and holds more hopes than all the other big world cities put together."

Meadows shook his head. He had known men out of work in New York who had labeled her anything but a city of realized hopes. "Perhaps if you could buy an interest in something," he hazarded.

"But I can't," Chester returned. "That's the curious part of it, Meadows. I have just enough to pay up and then lose myself in busier circles. If we had played ten minutes longer this afternoon, I might have had to declare myself unable to pay. You know what that means

— social extinction with never a reparation possible.”

Meadows took up the sheaf of bills and glanced through them. “I come of a different class from you, sir,” he said at length, “and I dare say I see things in different lights, but this talk of paying everybody in full seems a bad move. Here’s Schmalz’s bill for flowers. He has charged eighty dollars for what is worth thirty. The taxicab bill says you owe sixty; I don’t recall half of these items. And there’s others, too.”

“Well, what about it?” Chester demanded.

“This much,” said the man. “You need the money and they don’t, so why not pay them when it’s convenient?”

Chester shook his head. “I don’t think so. I’m not posing as a very upright specimen. You know me too well for that and there’s a certain proverb which disposes of that idea, but I have a certain fancy to leave New York, or at any rate my present position here, in good order. If I were living in any other city it might be different but I’m rather fond of New York, Meadows. I’ve a notion to leave it with a clear conscience. There aren’t six families in America today which have a better right to call it their city than we

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Chesters have. There's something, I don't know how to define it, which binds me to the old place and some day, if I ever get back again, I want to live and die in peace and without the fear of old follies. You meant it kindly, Meadows, but I must find some other way than that."

"But it's a hard city for a man who hasn't worked," the other persisted. "Unless," he added more hopefully, "some of your rich friends will help you."

"A poor man has no rich friends," his employer told him. "So long as I was Richard Chester with plenty of money, it was well enough, but now —" he shrugged his shoulders — "now I shall be a casual acquaintance. I shall be Richard Chester looking for work."

"Nobody will believe it," said Meadows firmly.

"They won't know it," said Chester. "I'm not going begging for company secretaryships."

Meadows looked at him aghast. He had never served a more particular man than this same Richard Chester, who spoke so gaily about going to work. And to the servitor who had come of a long line of men devoted in their several spheres to the service of great families, there was

something almost sacrilegious in his Mr. Chester competing with the crowds of men who flock to the great centres in search of fortune. "I don't like it at all," he said at length. "It isn't befitting for you."

"You can't sin without paying," said his employer decisively. "I've broken laws and must serve my sentence."

Meadows looked apprehensive. "Broken laws, sir?" he asked.

"The laws of economy and that sort of thing. I don't claim it as original; I read something of the kind at Yale but I never applied it till now."

"There's your brother," suggested Meadows. "He had great interests here."

"I should welcome starvation rather than appeal to him," snapped the younger Chester. Meadows sighed; he knew the fighting light that shone in his master's eye at this mention of John. Meadows had never been able to fathom the nature of the quarrel which turned the two men from fair friends to bitter foes. "But what can you do?" he asked. "You've no profession."

"One doesn't need that nowadays," Chester returned easily. "From newspaper biographies nearly all of our great men owed their fortunes

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to luck as well as pluck. It's a young man's age and these great capitalist fellows size one up pretty quickly. I thought of applying to some of the mining magnates. I know something of mining, remember."

Meadows was still dubious. "You owned the mines, sir," he said, "and that makes all the difference. I doubt if any one would employ you in a responsible capacity."

"Your faith in me," said the other, drily, "is not of a torrential nature."

"I've every faith in you," the man cried eagerly. "What you make up your mind to do, you will do, but you've got to get your chance first." Meadows was suffused with a gloom that was born of knowledge of the world. "There's many a good man who gets his heart broken looking for work here."

"Not all of them," Chester declared. "But I don't suppose it will be altogether pleasant."

"If you'll excuse me," said Meadows with great earnestness, "it will be hell!"

Chester's voice took a note of impatience. "Do you propose that I should commit suicide then? I have told you that an appeal to my brother is out of the question, and since I've

certain prejudices against dishonesty, I see nothing ahead but work. And I'm not sure," he concluded, "that it doesn't take a lot more brains to get on dishonestly." He looked at his man shrewdly. "Have you got something up your sleeve?"

"If you only had a little money to buy an interest in something."

"I've told you I have not," Chester said.

Meadows still seemed unconvinced. "There's the automobile," he suggested. "There's a bill against it at the garage, but if you sold it, you would have a tidy sum."

"Try again," said Chester. "At five minutes past six I lost it to Mr. Adolph Frankel. The only redeeming feature in the whole business is that he takes the bill, too."

Meadows suffered from an attack of diffidence. "You've paid me very good wages while I've been with you," he commenced, "and I've been able to put by most of it. In fact," cried Meadows, in a burst of confidence, "it's more than I want. Now I was thinking if I took the liberty of lending you, say a thousand dollars, you wouldn't have to waste a long time on uncongenial work."

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He paused, rather alarmed at his temerity. His employer was regarding him steadily with a look that was strange to him.

"Have I ever shaken hands with you, Meadows?" he demanded.

"Certainly not, sir," the man hastened to assure him, "I hope I know my position too well for that."

"Try and forget it now," Chester said, holding out his hand.

Meadows gripped it almost timidly but his pale face flushed with gratification. "Then you'll take the money?" he asked.

Chester shook his head. "I think not," he responded. "You mustn't feel offended, Meadows. I shall always remember that one man had confidence in me. It's a good thing to know, but I won't borrow from any one. Perhaps some of my friends might help if I asked, but I won't ask them, for the same reason that I refused your aid. You see I've expected this to happen for some time now. It came quicker than I anticipated but one can't go on living on capital for ever." He sighed. "I've played the fool most of my days with eminent success and the economic laws have sentenced me to poverty and

work. I look on it as some good folk do on penances — what must be undergone before attaining better things. I don't anticipate a lifelong penance." He laughed lightly and the other's heart rejoiced at the pluck he evinced. "I'm even now peering beyond the penance stage into the future and I've got enough conceit to think that it isn't going to be a black one."

Meadows knew it was impossible to alter the younger man's intention. What was firmness from a Chester point of view passed for obstinacy among Chester foes. "My offer always holds good, sir." Meadows turned to pick up some of the bills which had fluttered to the floor and he was not sure whether a suspicious moisture in his eye might not be observable to his employer.

"You're a white man, Meadows," Chester cried impulsively, "and I sha'n't forget it, but I wish you'd tell me why you wanted to give notice. I know now that it isn't the ungenerous reason I thought." For the second time in his ten years of service, Chester beheld a blush on the pallid cheek of his man.

"Love," he explained in a weak voice. "Love has crept in."

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"Love!" ejaculated Chester. "Love has crept in?"

"A widow with a hotel," Meadows elaborated. "A select hotel, you understand, sir, appealing only to the best families in search of rest." The ardent soul, encouraged by what he hoped was encouragement on his master's face, waxed bolder. "Do you know much of the female heart?" he inquired, gently.

"From what point of view?" the other demanded. "The anatomist's or the poet's?"

"Oh, the poet's, sir," Meadows returned, properly scandalized.

Chester stooped to light a cigar. "I hope you will be happy," he said.

In his enthusiasm, Meadows failed to observe that Chester's interest had received a sudden check. Meadows had often deplored that his master took so little interest in the society of women. A brilliant marriage, as he wished often he dared to suggest, would rehabilitate his master's fallen fortunes. He timidly offered it now.

"I've often thought," he ventured, "that if you had married like Mr. John, it would have been a good thing."

"I think otherwise," he said slowly. He looked

at the clock. "I sha'n't want you any more to-night. You can go out if you wish."

Meadows bowed and withdrew. He understood that he was dismissed.

CHAPTER II

THE BARRED DOOR

“Though a man may be wicked, yet, if he adjust his thoughts, fast, and bathe, he may sacrifice to God.” — *Mencius*.

WHEN he was twenty-one and newly come into possession of his fortune, Richard Chester had become engaged to Marion Griffiths. A year his junior, she was a great heiress and a beauty and noted in a circle of attractive girls for a certain seriousness of disposition which is not usually found in the younger members of fashionable sets. Many there were who admired her and none more openly than John Chester, who presently lost what chance he had of making her his wife by reason of the impetuous wooing of the more dashing Richard.

It was at this time that Richard was engaged in working out the dramatic destinies of the lady who maltreated Shakespeare's plays. His youthful ardor was not born of any love for the lady — her affections were otherwise secured — but rather of the conviction that New York critics were

venial and biassed in attempting to deny his star's abilities compared with those imported from the continent of Europe. It was a situation which John Chester used very neatly against his rival. And, indeed, the sophisticated might be pardoned for thinking that Marion had cause for righteous anger. Her impetuous Richard, disdaining reply to such insinuations, left the matter so much in doubt that the poor girl, wearing the unwonted character of haughtiness, told her lover he must choose between Thespia and her. Conscious of no offense and ignorant of the manufactured evidence with which she had been supplied, Richard grew every whit as wroth as she and left her, declaring no love was genuine which did not cast out doubt.

Within a week he was *en route* for South America and fabled monsters. He returned just a year later. Twelve months of hard thinking and the written hints of certain friends had given him a clearer idea of the reasons leading to his estrangement with Marion. John Chester, a tall, gaunt man, with suspicious eyes, listened unmoved to his accusations. "Appearances were against you," he said. "You were justly punished."

"But you knew there was nothing in it," the

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younger cried, hotly. "Who knows me better than you, John? When I gave you my word of honor there was nothing in the rumor, you might have staked your soul on it."

He wondered at the lack of resentment, almost of interest evinced by the brother who was as hot-tempered as he himself.

"I shall find her," said Richard, "and tell her how you lied; and I shall tell her you are no more a brother of mine."

"Do you know where she is?" John demanded.

"It won't be hard," Richard snapped.

"Harder than you think," said John quietly.

"I don't expect your help," cried the younger.

"I'll give it to you unasked," John returned. He wrote for a minute on a pad and handed the sheet of paper to the other.

"If you take the night mail to the South," he said, "you may be in time."

"In time?" Richard echoed.

"In time," his brother repeated. He pointed to a grip standing in the corner. "You can take my place; I was going." From his pocketbook, he took a plain card on which was written in shaky characters the name "Mr. Chester." This he handed to Richard, who looked at it puzzling.

"What's this mean?" he demanded.

The elder Chester passed his hand across his face wearily. Not until then had Richard perceived how ill and tired he looked.

"The card," he said, "is one of admission to a function at which Miss Griffiths attends. It is fitting after your absence that you should go. I resign my card to you. It will admit you. On the piece of paper you will see the name Beaulieu Abbey. It is three miles outside Charleston, South Carolina. Marion," — he paused and Richard was not sure whether it was a spasm of merriment or of pain which passed over his thin face, — "Marion is staying there."

"But I don't understand," Richard protested.

Chester looked at him coldly. "I am not concerned with your lack of comprehension," he said, "but I do know that if you don't instantly set out for Beaulieu, I shall."

"I'll go," Richard returned, "and it's pretty good of you, John, after all, to put no obstacles in my way. Perhaps I spoke hastily; I'm sorry."

"We can discuss that when you return from the South," said John with the look that spoke almost of physical suffering.

Beaulieu Abbey proved to be a conventual

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establishment of some antiquity. He had no difficulty in getting a carriage from the depot at Charleston, and drove to Beaulieu, still at a loss to explain adequately the reason of his coming. When he handed his card at a door by which many other people were entering, he found himself assigned to a seat in the chapel whereon his name was affixed. The services commenced as he entered the building. But since he was of an alien faith, the ritual brought him little enlightenment. Yet the number of celebrants and the magnificence of their vestments argued some function of especial import. He watched the Bishop of the Diocese and his attendants pass down the aisle and pause outside the lay sisters' chapel. Slightly inclining his head, he could see them waiting there until a moment later the door was opened. And when the Bishop, the Deacon and the Sub-Deacon turned again in their solemn procession to the high altar, he noticed that they were followed by a group of girls in white. But there was only one of them all whom he saw and that one was Marion Griffiths, dressed in the beautiful costume of a fashionable bride. And there followed her five bridesmaids, three of whom were her sisters and two friends whom he had known.

Was this, he wondered, his heart thumping and his brain awirl, his brother's revenge, this strange errand to the wedding of the woman they both had loved?

From the row of people nearest the altar, Mr. Griffiths, arrayed in the garb of convention, rose and took his place by his daughter's side. With burning eyes, Richard looked about him for the man who had supplanted him. He could see none. He could gather from the service but little. He knew that the creed was being sung. And after this, he saw Marion with a tall, lighted candle in her hand, which she offered to the Deacon, who, taking it, placed it upon the altar. And then it was that the solemn, devotional air and reverent attitude of the congregation brought to him the conviction that this ceremony foreshadowed the enclosed life. Filled with an emotion that was new to him and gripped by the feeling that here was what he was powerless to resist, a course of events maturing thus on another plane, he listened half-numbed to the service.

He was presently conscious that the wicker basket he had seen borne by the youngest bridesmaid was offered to the Bishop, who sprinkled it with holy water and then, leaning forward,

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touched the rich wedding gown. And at this action, the four waiting sisters came and stripped it from her, leaving a plain white linen slip beneath. Then they clothed her in the habit of a novice. And while she lay prostrate before the altar, Chester passed through the bitter hour of his life. No man would have fought more gallantly than he for what was dear to him; neither danger nor hardship had power to stay his impetuous course, but here was something before which he must bow his head in silence and own himself conquered by what he must not resist. The people at his side looked at him in kindly sympathy. They saw a white-faced man shaken with those terrible sobs that seem almost like the pains of death.

After the Mass, she rose from the ground and on her head was placed a crown of flowers; and she was led to the door of the lay sisters' chapel, where the Bishop blessed her. And it seemed to Richard Chester as he saw her pass through the great door and out of his life that he had looked upon a saint.

Later, there were those of his friends who bade him take heart. They told him that the novice's vow was not binding; that if she found she had

no vocation, or the mistress of the novices feared hers was not the nature to become happily a member of the order, she could return to the world without incurring any disgrace.

But Richard, who knew the innate seriousness of her disposition and could never forget the look of ecstasy he had seen on her face, shook his head. And he was right. A year later he saw her take the second habit and heard her repeat those irrevocable vows which banished what hopes he had treasured that she might return to the world. "*Paupertatem, seu carentiam proprii, necnon clausuram perpetuam in hoc claustro. . . .*"

She had taken upon herself perpetual poverty, renouncing all right to possess, and had accepted perpetual enclosure within the little convent cloister.

There were some who imagined Richard Chester's freedom from any entanglement with women was due to the result of ingrained cynicism following on some unfortunate love affair. Very few knew the truth or by what name in the world Sister Agatha of Beaulieu Abbey had been called. And when monetary difficulties possessed him and the years were lengthening between the time he had seen his sweet-faced nun pass to her clois-

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tered life and his era of difficulties, he grew to think of her vows as a very blessed thing. What sort of a husband would he have made, he sometimes asked himself, who had conserved his own property so ill?

Until Meadows had, all unwittingly, brought back to his mind more vividly those days now ten years dead, he had always assumed that she was better in the peaceful existence she had chosen. But tonight, when a sense of loneliness never before experienced fell upon him, he thought of what his brother's trickery had bereft him. Why could not this gracious woman have brought him to a fuller sense of his duties, his responsibilities, his possibilities?

The mood with which he welcomed the opportunity to work and had even jested with Meadows as to his probable hardships passed away, leaving him to nurse his implacable grievance against his brother. It was preposterous that at one and thirty he should have to start to work for a living in competition with immigrants who had known from youth but the hardest toil and conceived of no existence where it was not. As a rule of a temperate nature, tonight psychic pressure led him to seek relief in whiskey.

And as he drank there was visible none of the ordinary effects of alcohol. All his energy was bent in bitter contemplation of his brother's injustice. And as he sat thus alone, other images were conjured up. First and foremost came that of a money-lender with whom he had costly dealings, an evil, cynical old reprobate who loaned money to rich men's sons at incredible interest. David Auge's hold on Chester had been shaken off after an all night session at auction bridge at five dollar points and a triumphant day at Belmont Park. He took from a drawer the memoranda relating to Auge and was looking at them with frowning face when Wardour Enderby was announced. He put the papers away and welcomed his friend.

"Come in," he said. "I'm feeling as dull as ditch water. Drink, my dear man, and banish that air of worry."

Enderby looked at him shrewdly. The flushed face that he saw was not usually associated with Chester.

"Not yet," he said, sitting down. "Later."

He looked through gold-rimmed glasses at his friend with friendly scrutiny. Considerably older than Chester, he affected the society of young men because he had preserved a certain youthful-

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ness of taste not shared by those of his own age as a rule.

"You'll be wanting that revenge pretty soon, I suppose?" he hazarded.

Chester shook his head. "I don't think so."

"What!" cried the other, "you let us win all that money and don't pine to get it back?"

"I pine all right," laughed Chester, "in fact it almost hurts me, but I'm not after revenge all the same."

"Is there any explanation?" Enderby asked quietly.

Chester looked at him with a smile. "My dear man," he said, "it is not considered good form to play for money if one hasn't the wherewithal to pay in the event of losing. I believe in the vigorous West they reward one with sudden death for that sort of thing — but even here it can be unpleasant."

Enderby looked genuinely concerned. "You don't mean to tell me —" he began.

Chester interrupted him. "I most assuredly do. I can't explain this to the other men but I tell you because you're certain to keep your mouth shut."

"This worries me," Enderby exclaimed impulsively.

"I'm not setting it to ragtime music, either," Chester assured him.

"Why didn't you stop playing?" Enderby demanded. "Surely you knew it was your bad day?"

"We agreed to go on until seven," Chester reminded him, "and the time went most damnable slow. That's all."

"What are you going to do, then?"

"Cut out cards for good and look for work."

"It's a hard game," said Enderby earnestly.

Chester looked at him plaintively. "Can't you tell a cheerful lie and say there never were times when bright young men were more certain of reward? Meadows fills me with cold cheer and you commence to harp on the same minor string. I'm not proposing this in the smoking room of a London club where it would be absurd. I'm talking twentieth-century Manhattan where I've been led to believe a man can get on if he tries hard enough. I'm going to try hard."

Enderby waved his hand impatiently. "Oh, the theory's all right. I've often talked those easy platitudes myself, but you've got to start *de novo*."

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"No prejudices to hamper me," Chester affirmed.

Enderby was still unconvinced. "Your habits of life are all against it," he asserted. "Bred in luxury, used to all kinds of extravagances and the sports and pleasures of the rich, you calmly propose to get a job at a wage that wouldn't keep you in cigarettes. Can you picture yourself getting up at seven, shaving, eating a tasteless meal and punching a clock at half past eight?"

"That won't last long," retorted the other. "One might begin like that, but one would soon rise."

Enderby shrugged his shoulders. "I don't want to depress you," he said, "but that about rising so easily is the silliest notion. You'd expect if you condescended to work to be taken into partnership the next week! New York's chock full of bright young men who work hard all their blameless lives and think themselves lucky if they own an eight-room house when they're sixty. I have a proposition to put to you that I've often thought of but never felt it was advisable to talk of before. I've got a big law practice, Richard, a bigger one than I know how to take care of, and if I had a partner I could trust, it would be a great

help to me. How does Enderby and Chester strike you for the firm name?"

"What on earth do I know about law?" the other demanded.

"You'd have to get admitted to the bar," said Enderby, "but that isn't difficult."

"That's very white of you, Enderby," Chester exclaimed with gratitude, "but I have no money for three or four years' law study."

"I should be prepared to advance the money," Enderby returned.

"No, old man," cried Chester, "I'm not going to do things that way. If I'm man enough to earn the money, I'll come and ask if your offer stands good."

Enderby made a gesture of despair. He knew his friend too well to make the mistake of further argument. "I don't go back on what I say," he asserted. "When you are ready, I shall be waiting for you."

"It's a fine prospect," said Chester slowly. "I once thought of taking up law when I left Yale but something got in the way. I'll earn the money, Enderby, and I'll take a law course." He looked at him with a kinder light in his eyes. "And I think it's uncommonly good of you that

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you haven't offered a lot of platitudinous rot, miscalled advice, which most of us have on tap."

"A lawyer doesn't offer advice for nothing," the elder man returned, "as you'll remember when it's Enderby and Chester. They pay us for 'it.'"

"That's true," admitted Chester, and was silent for a moment. Presently he asked, "Will you give me a little gratis?"

"Fire ahead," said Enderby. "Company law is my strong point and I'm considered an expert on bankruptcy."

"This is simple," Chester told him. "I only want to know what's the legal rate of interest in this State?"

"Six per cent," Enderby said shortly.

"But what about special contracts?"

David Auge, money-lender to the foolish rich, always told his clients, when he had a particularly iniquitous agreement, that special contract rates were legally correct.

"The same," said the lawyer; "nothing above six is legal."

"But they do it," Richard cried.

"They do a whole lot of things," said Enderby, "and get away with them, too, but the State law

says six per centum all the same. And not only that, but it further decrees that usury shall be punished with loss of the principal, fine and imprisonment." He laughed. "If all men knew the laws on usury, there wouldn't be much chance for money-lenders and the baser sort of installment houses in this merry city."

Chester looked at him with kindling eyes. "Suppose A borrows a hundred dollars from B," he commenced, "and pays it back at the rate of fifty per cent., he's paying forty-four per cent. more than the law allows."

"That is so," Enderby admitted. "What interests you in this?"

"Only that I've paid back thousands more than I should have done."

"We all do," asserted the lawyer. "I've done it and most of the big financial geniuses have done it, too. If you want a lot of money and want it in a mighty hurry, it's worth more than six per cent."

Chester made a calculation on an envelope. "Is it worth one hundred and sixty?" he demanded.

"That's just rank usury," he was told. "Who charged that?"

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“I’m stating a supposititious case,” Chester answered, “and taking my first lesson at Gamaliel’s feet.”

Enderby rose to go. “Don’t do anything silly, Richard, before you consult me. My advice is yours when you want it and there’s more than advice, too, if you can be brought to regard things like a wise man.”

“You’re a good sort,” said Chester, wringing his hand. “And if anything puts heart into a man, it’s the knowledge that he has friends like you.”

CHAPTER III

THE UNFORTUNATE AVENGER

"Life is short, art is long, opportunity fugitive, experimenting dangerous, reasoning difficult." — *Hippocrates*.

DIRECTLY Enderby was gone, Chester seated himself at the table and went carefully through all the memoranda of transactions between him and Auge, transactions extending over three years. Still smarting from these recollections and a natural anger, strengthened by the stimulant he had taken, he presently found himself determined to seek out the money-lender and demand some explanations.

The amount he had overpaid Auge came to nearly seven thousand dollars. It was a sum he calculated more than sufficient to win his legal diploma, and legally it was his own. He would go to the usurer's home and threaten him with exposure. He had heard that such men feared more than anything publicity, and there was one of New York's magistrates who had earned for

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himself some fame by denouncing such practices. He would threaten Auge with this Draco and an understanding would be reached. In his present mood there seemed nothing out of the way in the scheme. He would be willing to accept five thousand dollars. And if Auge refused, as would be not unlikely, then there should be all the publicity possible. Richard chuckled to think of the matter reaching his brother by way of the yellow press. John had a fastidious horror of notoriety.

When he had committed himself to this adventure Richard's spirits rose amazingly. But he did not neglect to take certain precautions. He was not anxious to be recognized, and if by any chance Auge proved obstinate and talked of police and blackmail some disguise would be profitably employed.

There was a long, heavy, mustard-colored coat, owned by Meadows and used by him in traveling. It enveloped Chester completely and was so utterly unlike his own perfectly fitting garments as to be a disguise in itself. He put on the coat and took a traveling-cap and looked at himself in the mirror. Only a close observer would know him. In Meadows' pocket was a small package

on which was affixed the label of a London firm of wigmakers. It was, in fact, that partial apology which the valet wore for nature's unkindness in depriving him of hair at an early age. It was a thinly covered pink dome surrounded by decorous fringe and gave its wearer a grave and dignified mien. It was apparently new, and still filled with the spirit of his adventure and conscious that the ending might not be propitious, Chester clapped the thing on his own closely shorn head. And he saw, staring back at him from the glass, a middle-aged man with a flushed face and strained tired eyes. For a moment he stared back at this apparition half in alarm; but his mood at the sight turned from bitterness to a certain devil-may-care gaiety. Assuredly he could gain access to Auge as a complete stranger. He chuckled to think of the money-lender's surprise when he found, not a new victim, but an old one come for a reckoning. Ordinarily, Chester would have regarded the expedition as doomed to obvious failure, but this night was the culmination of many bitter hours of anticipation and he was lost to the absurdity in the desire to start a new life equipped with the money that was justly his but held illegally by the usurer.

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He watched his opportunity and walked the seven flights of stairs to the hall. His apartments were in a building famed for its quiet and absence of the rush and bustle of the modern apartment houses. Nobody was in the waiting-room and the man at the telephone, seeing only the mustard coat, fancied that Meadows was gone for his nightly exercises; master and man were much of a size and there was nothing to make the attendant suspect that a masquerade was begun.

Auge in a confidential moment had confessed to Chester that he lived at the top of a humble apartment on the West Side. He had taken a mental note of the address and easily called it to mind. It was 678 W. 76th Street. True, such an address had little sound of poverty in it, but Chester knew that New York's streets were strangely unequal and imagined it to be one of the cheaper apartments to which Riverside Drive turns a cold shoulder. But it proved to be a residential hotel of considerable pretensions set on the Drive itself. The beautifully carpeted lounge, the excellently appointed waiting-room and the broad stairway were superbly decorated. There were few better houses in the city of apartments. This, thought Chester, sourly, was the poor apart-

ment, the humble lodging the money-lender spoke of so suavely. There were many people in the hall and he passed unnoticed among them and commenced his unseen ascent of the stairs. At each floor he carefully scanned the names, and gradually ascended to the top. And one of the two — there were but two twelve-room suites on each floor — bore no name on the door. It would be just like Auge to conceal his identity. He was filled with a certainty that at last he had run the man to his home. Auge had always been unwilling to disclose where he lived and it was more an accidental happening than anything else that he had gained a knowledge of the address.

Before pressing the bell he tried the handle of the door; to his surprise it was open and he found himself a moment later standing alone in a large, square hall papered in rich red and furnished in black Flemish oak. There was a shelf running the whole way round, on which were rare specimens of old pewter. By each side of the open grate stood suits of fifteenth-century Spanish armor. At a glance his experienced eyes told him that there was a considerable outlay of money. And he hardened his heart at the thought. There was still no sound and he made his stealthy

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way to a slightly opened door at the right. He was determined to come upon Auge unannounced, and fate had been, so far, kind. He must do this or take the risk of being considered as a burglar. Meadows' coat was in no sense indicative of a fashionable prosperity.

And as he paused, conscious of a certain irresolution, a distant door opened and footsteps advanced toward him. They were quick, short steps, utterly unlike Auge's elderly dragging stride. Since it would not suit his purpose to be discovered by a servant, he moved silently to the door and passed through it. As he did so the footsteps died away and he found himself alone in a large dimly lighted apartment. If he had been surprised at the wealth and taste shown in the furnishing of the hall, he was staggered at what this room showed. It was an exquisitely furnished Louis Seize salon.

There is no style of the many which have marked the French genius for interior decoration more perfect than that which bears the name of the unfortunate king who paid the penalty of his predecessor's misgovernment. It has been said that this style was inspired by the Grecian art of the glorious period three centuries before

Christ, just as that of its immediate predecessor — that of Louis Quinze, was built upon the Roman art of the second century. And as a man who had lived in great houses and amid rich surroundings, Chester knew instantly that this was no modern imitation but indeed the genuine article. As he looked at it, he wondered what proportion of his own overpayment had gone to pay but a tenth of its value. He was startled out of this profitless musing by a voice at a telephone hard by and he observed that at right angles to this room was another into which he could not see. It was a girl's fresh, clear voice. "Send Mr. Cosway here at once," she said. Then she rang off and left the intruder to ponder on his course of action. If Mr. Cosway were to be shown into the Louis Seize room there would clearly be trouble. He began to be less definite in his belief that this was Auge's flat. Afraid to move until the girl in the other room was gone, he delayed too long, and heard with despair the ring of the outside bell. Escape by the way he had come was plainly impossible.

Their voices in the hall grew louder as they approached his room, and in desperation he looked about him for a way of evasion. In a panic he

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espied in a distant corner a tall screen all gilt and splendor and behind this he hid himself, thankful that Meadows' mustard-colored coat in the dim light was not too markedly different in hue to be discovered through the hinge's chink. The possessor of the most unusual amount of *savoir faire* might be pardoned the reasonable flurry in which Richard Chester found himself. Suddenly stripped of his excuse to be in the building at all and face to face with an exposure which must inevitably lead to the police station and the glare of the yellow journals, he chose what seemed at the moment the only means of safety. He was no longer a believer in his destiny. Fortune, he ruminated from his retreat, was behaving meanly.

When the door opened there entered a white-haired old man carrying in his hand a leathern portfolio. Chester prayed fervently that he would betake himself to the other apartment wherein was the telephone, but he sank into a near-by chair, evincing fatigue, rising a minute later to greet the girl who had spoken over the telephone. While she was standing Chester had a very fair view of her.

Rather below the middle height, she was slenderly and daintily made, with a charming figure

and complexion. Her hair was of that rare shade of golden brown which owes nothing of its beauty to dye or bleach. Whether her eyes were blue or gray he was unable to determine, but they were large and fringed with black lashes, and she was worthy of the word lovely. Chester was not one of the men who are ignorant of the costumes of women. He had found out years before that women do not covet a blind admiration for their costumes on the part of men, but appreciate a trained and intelligent appreciation; and he never made the mistake of supposing that a simple gown must be an inexpensive one. This girl wore a tunic of lace over a robe of light blue silk; and lace, as he knew, might represent enormous value.

"I'm immensely relieved that you are here," she said, shaking the old man's hand. "I'm in terrible trouble."

Mr. Cosway sighed. "Why weren't you contented to leave business and stock markets alone?"

"Blame my ancestors," she returned. "Some women prefer bridge at quarter points; I've found no excitement like managing one's own affairs."

"But you didn't bring me post haste from Chicago to tell me that?"

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"You've brought me a copy of that hateful will?" she demanded.

"Naturally," he said gravely. "Am I to understand that you mean to comply at last with its provisions?"

"Perhaps I may have to," she answered soberly.

"You swore nothing should make you."

"I never contemplated poverty," she retorted. "I may as well admit it, but the markets and everything else have gone against me. If I can't get enough money to carry me over at my brokers and finance my Brazilian mine I shall have to call a meeting of my creditors."

"What would your father say?" groaned the old lawyer.

"He wouldn't say anything," the girl cried. "He'd do something."

"It's fortunate you've been brought to taking a sensible view of your grandfather's will, then," Mr. Cosway commented drily.

"I haven't," she said. "I still think its conditions abominable and I loathe the very thought of my grandfather. Why should he want to lay it down that we women are the weaker vessels, when it isn't true?"

"Why a woman should want to compete with men in the business world is equally beyond my comprehension," said old Cosway. He had watched this wayward girl go deeply into schemes that were beyond his limits and bring them to successful issues in a manner that confounded him and his estimate of her abilities. This was the first time in the years he had known her that he had been able to reflect that his prognostications had a measure of truth in them.

"We can never agree on that," she retorted quickly, "so why argue? I am perfectly certain that if I get my grandfather's money, I shall be worth twice as much in three months' time as ever I was. I have borrowed all that I could and am absolutely driven to comply with the degrading terms of the will."

The old man looked at his watch. "You haven't much time," he said. "It is ten o'clock and the term set by the late Mr. Simon Ellis expires at midnight."

"I have enough not to need to hurry," she returned. "In the dining-room you will find a little supper all ready for you. I haven't forgotten that you don't like eating on the train and I shouldn't be surprised to hear you've had practi-

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cally nothing since you left Chicago. At half past ten the motor will be ready and we shall go."

"Where?" he questioned.

She made a little move of disgust. "To fetch my husband."

"I hope he will be a good man and a true husband."

"One hardly ventures to expect so much," she said. "But whether he is or not doesn't really matter much."

Old Cosway looked at her reproachfully. "You have altered very much of late, I fear," he commented. He could not bear jesting on what he felt was a very solemn business. "May I ask his name?"

"I have no more idea than you have," she returned.

"What!" he cried. "You don't know the name of your husband to be? You can't tell me who it is who will give you your grandfather's fortune with his name?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," she said simply. "I am going to look for one and I need you both as a chaperon and counsel. I have decided first on the bread line."

Cosway grew red with indignation and he rose

to his feet. "Do I understand that you and I go husband hunting at this time of night among the dregs?"

"Why not?" she said. "And as to the bread line being composed solely of dregs, I'm led to suppose that there are all sorts and conditions there. Men who have university educations and yet can't get anything to eat. Some of these won't object to earn money."

"I absolutely refuse," cried the other.

She shrugged her shoulders. "Very well, I must take my maid instead."

"It's preposterous," he fumed.

"Then you'd rather have me a beggar?" she asked.

"It can't be as bad as that," he objected.

"Every bit," she said steadily. "I'm not likely to exaggerate things at a time like this. You know I determined to be a rich woman so that I should never feel cause to regret not complying with the will. I have prospered, as you know, and but for the panic I should be worth a million. Lots of capitalists have been absolutely wiped out, but I just escaped. With the quarter of a million that will be mine tomorrow I can weather the storm. Otherwise I spend

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the rest of my days in a cheap continental pension."

"I am very much distressed to learn this," Mr. Cosway admitted.

"Do you suppose I'm overjoyed?" demanded the girl. She looked at him with a pathetic smile that touched him. He could see that her pretense of carelessness hid a heart that had little mirth in it.

"But marriage is so serious," he said, "such a solemn thing."

"It won't be with me," she cried. "I shall just marry him, and then give him a sum of money, and that will end my marriage romance. Do you suppose that I am the sort of woman to take a man from the gutter and cling to him?" Chester noted with admiration the spectacle of her superb scorn.

"But your grandfather meant more than that," he urged.

"He was a bad lawyer, then," she laughed, "for the will as I remember it says nothing more than that I am to marry. Read it."

Cosway drew a document from the portfolio and moved toward one of the Mansoorah lamps which lighted the room. He presently came to

the clause in question and read it aloud. "To my granddaughter, Norah Ellis, I bequeath the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars on attaining her twenty-fifth birthday provided that she shall be married. In the event of her remaining single, the said sum of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars shall go to Dartmouth College to be used as the governors of that institution deem fit and proper. I am led to make this stipulation with regard to my granddaughter, Norah Ellis, because I feel that the independent spirit evinced by the rising generation of women and their lack of reverence toward the institution of holy matrimony is against the best interests of national prosperity."

Cosway put the will down and looked at his client. "Yes," he commented, "you are right."

"Of course I am," she said in triumph. "Do you think I haven't given plenty of time to it? And I'm right in my estimate of my grandfather. Holy matrimony indeed! What reward had my poor meek, broken-spirited grandmother for her devotion to him and his whims? He left her half of what I shall get and then advertised himself in charitable bequests to colleges and things that hadn't any need of them. I'm not a suffragette or

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anything militant like that, but I think that will be an unwarrantable stricture on my sex. Do you suppose I'm content to marry a man and then admit tacitly there's an end of my individuality? I'm not a misanthrope; there are plenty of men I like, but not well enough to marry."

"I'm afraid you are rather cynical," said the overwhelmed lawyer.

"Not a bit," she returned more brightly, "I'm just a woman like all the rest of my sex; when I was romantic and eighteen, I really fell in love with a man who never looked at me, and I lost weight and felt poor Marie Bashkirtseff was a kindred soul. Some day I may meet a man I shall love, but I don't think it's likely; I'm very well satisfied with things as they are."

"I hope this hasty action may not bring sorrow to you," said the other. His reproaches were dying and he could not but feel an admiration for the girl. The late Simon Ellis had not been of a lovable nature.

"One never knows," she admitted with philosophical calmness. "But meanwhile your supper awaits you."

"I don't like it," he muttered, "it's so irregular."

“Not a bit,” she corrected. “It’s all *en regle*. Dr. Plumm, the hotel chaplain — the man who marries more people in haste than any other living chaplain — is at my disposal till midnight, and the whole thing is arranged. Now, my dear, good man, to your well earned meal.”

From his hiding place Chester watched the girl link her arm within the old man’s and pass out of sight. It was his Heaven-sent opportunity to efface himself, and when he was assured that the twain had gone, he crept into the open. But Meadows’ heavy trailing coat caught the base of the screen and a crash was only averted by his catching the thing and replacing it. And it was with this he was occupied when footsteps were heard and he crept back into security just as the girl re-entered the room.

So near to him she sat that he could see how tired she looked, and now that she was supposedly alone, so anxious. His position was almost intolerable. Every instinct of his nature revolted against the unwitting sight of a woman in distress. He had divined with far more readiness than the elder man with what fierceness she must have battled and how tragic was the loss which made her submit to the conditions of a legacy which

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she regarded as intolerable. And Richard Chester's heart ever went out to a good loser. There was to him something almost nobler in bravely accepting defeat than in the gaining of contests. In other ages the Chesters had gone gaily to the tourney to defend the beauty and fame of their ladies. And never in his life had his ready sympathy been so instantly captured as by the exquisite girl sitting not a yard from him.

He was utterly without plans as to what he must do. To hear more of her private history seemed black dishonor; to disclose himself spelled disgrace. It would be safer, he concluded presently, to wait until she and Cosway were gone and then make a dash for the door. He was afraid from so short a distance that she must hear his breathing, and he peered anxiously through the crack to see what were her immediate plans. And what might have been Richard Chester's ultimate fate if he had pursued this plan and crept unobserved into the night are but idle conjecture. He looked upon a woman's tears as many a man before him, and it is to be hoped, for the chivalry of his sex, many a man after him; his prearranged schemes came to naught, and what the romantic call by such names as Providence and destiny

stood by him and took command of the situation. Richard saw that she was crying softly. Down the exquisite oval of her cheeks the tears rolled rapidly. It filled him with an emotion so poignant that he clenched his hands and bit his lips to prevent his uttering an exclamation. And as he did so his hand struck the screen.

CHAPTER IV

AMAZING MATRIMONY

"The sense of shame is to a man of great importance. When one is ashamed of having been without shame, he will afterwards not have occasion for shame." — *Mencius*.

INSTANTLY the girl sprang to her feet and came forward and saw him crouching in mustard-hued shame in a shadowy corner.

"Come out," she commanded in firm, distinct tones.

For the first time in his life, Chester did not care to look a woman in the eye.

"What were you doing there?" she demanded.

"It was a mistake," he said lamely. "I came to the wrong apartment."

"Innocent men don't hide in corners," she snapped. "What did you come for?" There was a veiled threat in her voice. "It would be better to tell the truth."

He recovered his balance in a measure and spoke more easily. "What I said was true," he



"Come out," she commanded in firm, distinct tones.
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asserted. "Let me join my apologies to my excuse."

"I think," she said slowly, "if you knew how much appearances were against you, you would not try to brazen this out."

"But, my dear lady," he protested, "I'm telling the simple truth. The very halting of the narrative should convince you of that. Only a lie needs to be plausible."

She frowned for a moment and then turned on him with angry eyes. "Perhaps you are a journalist?" she cried.

"Nothing half so useful," he made answer. He had recovered his imperturbable good humor again. "I assure you I am neither journalist nor detective. I'm merely the victim of a mistake. My error consists in being found out."

"No doubt," she said drily. "I imagine that is the worst thing that can befall gentlemen of your profession."

"My profession?" he echoed.

"Can you expect me to believe you are here for any honest purpose?"

Nobody had ever infused such scorn in a speech to him as this slim girl, and he felt himself flushing. To be mistaken for a second-story man!

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"I'm not so hopelessly silly as to imagine you came in by accident and concealed yourself ingenuously."

"It certainly does sound a silly excuse, doesn't it?" he observed meditatively. "I wouldn't believe it for a moment if you told it to me."

"And yet you hope I shall credit it." She looked at him indignantly.

"I rely on your woman's intuition," he responded, "that wonderful sixth sense which makes you our superiors. Tell me frankly, do I look like a burglar?"

Chester was not a vain man, but he knew himself as possessing youth, health and a frank bearing, not habitually seen on criminal countenances. He had always made friends easily and he was sure this girl would see that he was no low ruffian intent on larceny.

The girl looked at him critically. She saw a tall, red faced, elderly man wearing but little hair on a polished dome. Richard's eyes fell before her cold glances. "Really," he exclaimed, "you make me nervous. I'm only asking you to assure me that I haven't the physiognomy of the crook."

"I detect," she said, "no redeeming features whatsoever."

“If I’m prejudged,” he said, “no purpose is served by talking. I can only repeat that I came to a wrong address and concealed myself stupidly rather than own up.”

She looked at him with less hostile eyes. His voice, low-pitched and pleasant, attracted her, but she stifled this feeling and wondered what had best be done. Ordinarily — since she shared no maudlin sympathy with the criminal classes — she would have summoned a policeman. But her cheeks burned when she reflected that he must have overheard the whole of her conversation with Mr. Cosway. It would not need an intelligence above the normal to see in this a story which might be sold with profit to competing editors. The clipping bureau to which she subscribed sent her every morning what balked journalists sent out to get a story at any price had to say of her. It was notorious that even the mildest of journalists, when he was denied entrance to his victim with scorn and contumely, evolved from his subliminal self details which did not flatter. She had been variously described as a man-hater, a neurasthenic, a superwoman and a stock gambler who lost badly. How the special story and rewrite men would pound their type-

writers in fierce glee to get such a story! She could see herself cartooned as the bread-line bride and laughed at, the continent over. A sense of humor — that attribute denied one's enemies — deserted her. There was no glimmer of brightness in the whole wretched episode. She looked at him with a distaste that was not pleasant.

"What will you do if I let you go?" she asked.

"Depart with speed," he retorted, "and turn out my pockets to show my innocence."

Mr. Cosway's heavy tread was heard and a moment later he looked into the room, withdrawing directly he saw that his client was engaged. The sight of him brought back to the girl the purpose for which he had come, a purpose which the excitement of her encounter with Chester had banished. And Chester, still looking at her, wondered why, without apparent reason, she should cast down her brilliant eyes and blush like a schoolgirl. He could not guess her feverish anxiety to believe his improbable story.

"Whom did you expect to meet here?" she demanded.

"His name is David Auge."

"No one of that name lives here," she returned, disappointed.

"It's the address he gave me," said Chester.

"Come with me to the telephone," she commanded. Obediently he followed her into the adjoining room and watched while she called up "information." Information was in a docile mood and vouchsafed that Auge's address was 678 W. 176th Street.

"I wonder if you are telling the truth," she murmured.

"It's a day of mistakes for me," he returned gloomily.

"What did you want with him?" she demanded suddenly.

"I wanted a reckoning," he declared, his manner changed.

She motioned him to a seat and took another opposite. "I am not justified in letting you go until I have some corroboration of this. If you care to explain in any way I may think differently."

"He's a money-lender," explained Chester, "and he has charged me outrageously illegal interest, and I was going —" he paused for a moment, "I was going to suggest that he return it."

"How?" she asked.

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He smiled at her judicial manner. It consorted so ill with the daintiness of her appearance.

He hesitated a moment. "I hardly know," he admitted; "it all depended on how he received me."

"Then you may have been prevented from committing a crime," she asserted. "It's very fortunate you made this mistake."

"Perhaps," he assented dubiously, "if I am allowed to depart I may think so, but at present I don't quite understand what your plans are."

Again there was the transient blush for which he could not account. "I want you to clear yourself," she said. "I want to feel perfectly easy in my conscience at letting you go."

"I hope that won't be difficult," he returned. Her manner had become so gracious that he felt she understood and condoned the mood which had led him to the wrong house. It was very charming of her not to have had hysteria and summoned police aid. And she looked exceedingly attractive in her tunic of *point de Venice à réseau*.

"I suppose you were hard up?" she hinted.

"Horribly so," he smiled back at her. "In fact I was so miserable about it that I determined on what now seems a very silly scheme."

"These wretched money-lenders do a great deal of harm," she said. "One hears often of how they exact huge interest because they know men in offices or stores are afraid of their employers learning of it."

"That's very true," he agreed.

She looked at him keenly. "I suppose that's how it was with you?"

He hesitated; it would serve no good purpose to explain that he was not of those fearing employers' anger.

"Something like it," he admitted.

"It is grossly unfair," she exclaimed, "the wives and families suffer so. This must distress your wife very much."

"Thank God," he cried with a fervor she could hardly doubt, "I never took to myself a wife."

"Have you any work, any permanent work?" she demanded.

"Not yet," he returned. "Tomorrow I set forth to conquer the world."

She looked at his thinning locks for a moment. "It's the *metier* of young men."

"It certainly is," he agreed heartily, unaware of the extra years he was supposed to carry. "And I'm not so old after all." Meadows' de-

corous wig was forgotten. It rested snugly on his well-shaped head, no super-incumbent weight to remind him of it. He was betrayed by her interest into a certain boyish frankness. "Of course," he added, "I'm not expecting to do anything wonderful at first."

"But one needs money, doesn't one?" she asked.

He warmed to her for the kindly interest displayed. It was delightful to sit talking to a beautiful woman instead of going — as he had confidently expected five minutes before — into the night, with gyves upon his wrist like the luckless Eugene Aram.

He shrugged his shoulders. "I must make it."

"But your relatives," she objected, "they will help?"

"I have none," he told her, eliminating his brother. "I am a waif and stray with nothing but hope."

She regarded this elderly waif with some satisfaction. The Gods of Chance had brought this naif world-conqueror to her at a time when he was needed. And Richard felt the unusual desire to become strangely confidential but checked himself; he must not trespass upon her kindness.

“Am I allowed to go?” he asked, rising. And even as he added it, it seemed that the look of interest died from her face. There gazed at him instead a rather haughty-looking woman with cold eyes.

“Not yet,” she said.

“Why not?” he demanded. “I thought since you were satisfied to believe me neither burglar nor journalist, but only —” he hesitated, “only a luckless wight in search of work, I might go.”

“It’s the very reason why you may not,” she retorted.

“Why?” he asked. “I give it up.”

“Because you are going to marry me,” she said.

He looked at her, flushing; she had out-maneuvred him and invited these confidences only to one end. He understood now why she had altered.

“And if I refuse?” he queried.

“I shall charge you with attempted burglary, and press the charge.”

“You are certainly a very clever young woman,” he commented, “but as for pressing the charge, do you think you have the courage?”

“I should have to,” she said.

“I suppose you would,” he said, reflecting.

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"You think I know too much. And I'll confess too," he added, "that I am not anxious to figure as a thief. I fancy one goes to Blackwell's Island for a time on a charge of this sort."

"You will be suitably rewarded," she said.

"You are most kind," he returned.

"And as you heard what passed between Mr. Cosway and me you know that the marriage is the merest form. He will arrange all the other details. What do you say?"

"Call the excellent Cosway in," he said. "I agree."

Mr. Cosway looked at him with no obvious favor. "What is the name?" he asked.

"Dick," the younger man told him, "Mr. Chester Dick of New York. Perhaps you know the Dicks of New York?"

"I do not," said Cosway shortly. His nature revolted at the night's work. His attitude plainly indicated that under no conditions would a respectable person know such a family.

Until the marrying chaplain came at the telephone call, there was uncomfortable silence in the room. Chester, genuinely sorry for the girl, forgave her treatment of him, and had no mind to worry her with conversation. The Reverend

Marcus Plumm had run the gamut of the denominations in an effort, as he frequently explained, to broaden his spiritual and intellectual life. He was short, stout, red-faced and a worshipper of Mammon. He possessed great tact and constantly deplored the passing of the age of domestic chaplains. And he never married a rich man without looking on him as a possible patron; his silence was to be bought with a suitable honorarium. Dr. Plumm — his degree was obtained from an obscure college no longer allowed to dispense them — had looked forward with some excitement to meeting the husband of the wealthy Miss Ellis, and the disappointment he experienced at a sight of the tall, middle-aged man in the shabby mustard-colored coat was bitter. Gone were his dreams of social advancement thereby, and he bowed very coldly to Chester Dick.

“My friends,” he said, “are we ready to commence this solemn ceremony?”

Lacking the customary ring, Richard Chester drew a much worn signet from his little finger and presently Norah Ellis found it slipped upon the third finger of her left hand. Then there were the necessary papers to be signed and witnessed. An elderly maid servant was the lawyer’s

fellow witness, and the whole matter was arranged with expedition. When Dr. Plumm, filling in the certificates, heard Chester Dick give his age as thirty-one, he frowned heavily and added a decade. He had finished his work, handed the documents to Mr. Cosway and pocketed his comfortable fee, when voices were heard in the hall outside. The girl looked disturbed and frowned when a knock was heard on the inner door.

She turned to Cosway and the chaplain. "It's my aunt's voice," she said. "Not a word of this, remember."

She beckoned Chester to the inner room and placed something in his hand. "Please go out that way," she said, indicating a door. "It leads into the hall. Mr. Cosway will communicate with you." She turned abruptly and left him gazing after his wife and the rewards of matrimony.

He looked at the roll of bills and smiled. "I think not," he muttered. To be tipped like a lackey and then steal away like a man ashamed was no part of Chester's conception of his place in the universe. Assuredly his wife was a surprising woman, and since after tonight he would never see her he must bid her a decent farewell and return the money.

He slipped off Meadows' coat and stood revealed as a tall, straight man clad in perfectly fitting evening clothes. Slowly he sauntered into the other room and was in time to witness the entrance of a rather stout, imperious woman of middle age. He knew her as a Mrs. Monmouth, a society leader of breeding and wealth, who ruled absolutely one of the many smart sets into which New York was divided. It had not been his set and he had never been presented to the lady, but he knew of her. She was followed by her daughter Ivy and her youngest son Ronald, neither of whom Chester had seen before.

"My dear," she cried to her niece, "we are on our way to the Boultons' dance and we've punctured a tire outside. I wouldn't allow them to announce us; I thought it would be a complete surprise."

Her eyes fell upon Dr. Plumm, who stood smiling and bowing. "And who may this be?" she demanded, surveying him through jeweled lorgnette.

"My name, dear lady," said the chaplain, "is Plumm. P, L, U, double M, Plumm. I have the privilege to be your charming niece's spiritual director."

Mrs. Monmouth looked at him without enthusiasm and her glance fell upon Mr. Cosway. "There's the good Cosway," she said graciously, extending her hand. "And who is the other gentleman?" she asked.

Norah turned to perceive her newly taken husband bereft of an ill-fitting coat and advanced thereby to greater social distinction. For the moment she was too flustered to speak but Chester relieved her of the necessity. "I am an old friend of the worthy Plumm's," he said easily. Plumm's gesture betrayed annoyance at this but he held his peace.

"Mr. Chester Dick — Mrs. Monmouth, Miss Ivy Monmouth, Mr. Ronald Monmouth," said Norah, recovering her self-possession. Both Chester and Plumm bowed formally. The former instantly set himself to capture the interest of the society leader and Plumm was disturbed to hear from time to time scandalously inaccurate anecdotes concerning his early days retailed freely by the man whom an hour before he had not met.

Disliking Plumm's pompous manner, Richard Chester made open fun of him and had rescued him from cannibal cauldrons in southern seas,

when Mrs. Monmouth turned to the chaplain with deeper interest.

"You are evidently more interesting than you look," she asserted. "Pray what are your hobbies now?" It was the chance he had longed for.

"Chorus girls," he retorted.

"And you confess it?" she cried.

Dr. Plumm was much disturbed by her interpretation. "My dear lady," he wailed, "I beg of you to believe that it is not that way at all. Their welfare is my hobby, if I may be permitted to call it so."

"How?" demanded Ronald Monmouth suspiciously. He also was interested in the welfare of chorus ladies. "What do you mean?"

"I have started a society for the provision of chaperons for them," he began eagerly. "Few people are so misunderstood as they. If they go unattended to our summer resorts, tongues wag wickedly. If they have only male escorts they are dubbed adventuresses. My scheme supplies them with chaperons of proved probity and also provides free medical attendance and other features which will interest you." Plumm made the running rapidly. "Everything is ready but a presi-

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dent, who must be a social power. Mrs. Monmouth, you are she."

But Mrs. Monmouth, although proud of the fact that she was president of more societies than any other woman in the world, had nevertheless learned caution in her dealings with them. "What funds have you?" she demanded.

"Nothing as yet," returned the fervent Plumm.

"That doesn't sound encouraging," she commented.

"Directly it is known you have accepted the presidency, they will come rolling in," he assured her.

"I wonder," she told him.

"I am sure of it," Chester remarked. Plumm looked at the interrupter sourly. From his pocket the younger man took a roll of bills and flung them to the red-visaged clergyman. "To start the ball rolling," he said carelessly. Plumm unrolled ten fifty-dollar bills with something like reverence. "My very dear friend," he said, "I misjudged you."

"I call it exceedingly liberal of Mr. Dick," said Mrs. Monmouth. She saw in him a future contributor to some of her pet charities. When a telephone message announced the automobile to be

ready she rose to go as the president of Plumm's benevolent concern. She shook hands with them all cordially and kissed her niece affectionately. "I've enjoyed myself so much," she declared. "One always meets such queer people here."

Ivy Monmouth detected the Chester signet ring on her cousin's finger and seized the hand. "I've never seen this before," she cried, trying to decipher the motto. The Chester wyverns were almost erased by time, but the deeply cut motto was still visible. "Manu forti," she read. "Ronald, what does that mean?"

"By the strong hand," he answered. "Just the sort of a motto she would choose." It had been his early ambition to marry Norah but she had other plans.

Cosway, left alone with the two strangely married people, felt his presence in the Louis Seize room unnecessary and took his papers into the adjoining apartment. His mind, never adaptive, was too thoroughly bewildered by the events of the hour to make him welcome conversation. He was an old man and feeble, and his journey had fatigued him.

Chester broke the silence. "I did not choose to be sent away like that," he said deliberately.

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"Why did you give the money away?" she demanded.

"I am not to be tipped like a waiter," he answered.

"It was money paid for services rendered," she retorted. "To give it away like that to that absurd man was a breach of promise."

"I made none," he said steadily.

"It was a breach of trust, then," she insisted. "I was in urgent need and you agreed to help me. I paid you not only as a reward for your trouble, but to feel that I was under no sort of obligation to you. And you deceived me into thinking you were a poor man."

"I spoke only the truth to you," he replied. "I am a poor man."

"But your clothes," she objected.

"Are all I have left," he said.

She looked at him almost angrily. She was thoroughly angry with herself and with the man whom the law regarded as her husband. So long as she supposed him to be a poor man in debt to money-lenders she had held the whip hand. But he was plainly her social equal and she had detected faint gleams of amusement in his eyes. She felt suddenly very young and with-

out experience. But she determined to have her way.

"I shall give you the money again," she declared.

"I shall not accept it," he said.

She stamped her foot angrily. "You are a thoroughly odious man," she cried. "It is not often American men embarrass women deliberately."

"Some day," he answered quietly, "I hope you will believe it is for the very reason that I am an American that I will not be bribed to forget it."

"As you will," she answered stiffly. "But may I ask you, by the honor I suppose you once had, never to presume to remember me if we should ever meet? Remember that I purchased your help and you chose to give the money away to a stupid charity."

He looked at her coldly as she gazed upon him. He was not proof against her scorn.

"By the honor you suppose I once had, I promise," he said.

She bowed her thanks. "If you will wait a few minutes I will send Mr. Cosway to you; there will be certain matters to arrange, I imagine."

"I had forgotten," he returned. "You mean, of course, our divorce. By all means send him in." He looked at the girl with a certain pity in his gaze. He had not forgotten her tears and he could guess dimly what humiliation this hour had been to her.

"Why," he said, "should we part with frowns? Isn't it better not to quarrel since we are never to meet again? On my honor I have lived a fairly decent life, and when you are yourself again, you will understand that a man cannot be paid for what I did. You will say that you forced me into it against my will. My dear lady, you didn't do anything of the kind. I come of obstinate stock and we are only driven where we want to go. I had heard your story and I thought you the pluckiest girl I had ever known, and if I helped you to defeat that old scoundrel of a grandfather, that's all the reward I want. I tell you this because I don't want you to think of me as a possible black-mailer. Divorce me as quickly as you can and never think you owe me a single thought."

"But I do," she cried with a pretty eagerness. "I do. You have saved my fortune and in return I've said some unwarrantable things. I do owe you something."

"Very little," he returned. "Think of my competitors in the bread line."

"I'm serious," she said. "You helped me and I do owe you something. But you do understand that it was desperation that made me do it, don't you?"

"I know," he said soothingly. "I understand it absolutely, and that's why I don't want to be frowned off the stage if it isn't absolutely necessary."

"And you won't bear any hard thoughts of me?" she asked. Her voice was not very steady and she looked like a slim child. "I'm not very proud of myself." She held out her hand. "Good-bye." He bent over it gallantly, and before she could withdraw it, had pressed a kiss upon it.

"Good-bye," he said, and sighed as she passed from the room. For the second time that night he wondered what sort of a man he might have become with a woman at his side whom he loved.

Mr. Cosway, bustling into the room, looked over his spectacles at Chester. "I want you to understand," he said in tones that were the reverse of cordial, "I utterly disapprove of the whole business." Chester looked at him sourly

and Cosway felt uncomfortable before the unexpected glance of his eyes.

"I am in no way concerned with your view of the case," the younger man said shortly. "If you are here as a lawyer, please talk on legal matters and leave the other aspects alone."

"In fairness to myself, I must repeat that I disapprove."

"Then why are you stage-managing it?" Chester demanded.

Cosway looked confused. "I am doing what I can to relieve a wilful woman from the consequences of her folly."

"It's a sentiment in melodrama which always gets a round of applause," Chester sneered. He resented the imputation of blame which the old man laid upon the girl. Cosway understood that he had no tractable being to browbeat. "Miss Ellis tells me," he commenced.

"Mrs. Chester Dick," the other corrected.

"As you will," said the old lawyer; "she tells me she has implicit confidence in you — why, I don't pretend to fathom — and that you have agreed to be no hindrance to her. As I must serve you with certain papers in due time, may I ask for your address?"

"My lawyer's address must do," said Chester. "Wardour Enderby, One Wall Street. Anything more?"

"That will do," said old Cosway, bowing. "Good night, Mr. Dick."

Chester rose to his feet, assumed once more the dismal-hued coat, and was prepared to take his leave when on the mantelpiece he noticed a charming miniature of his wife in an oval gold frame. He looked at it in silence. The painter had caught something of the exquisite lines of her profile and had reproduced her coloring exactly. Chester looked at it and sighed. Capricious memory alone would retain some recollection of the woman into whose life he had happened so strangely.

Old Cosway, full of the irritable impatience of old age, wanted him to be gone. "Good night," he repeated twice, and felt his anger rising at the other's immobility. But he was stricken with horror when Mr. Chester Dick took the miniature and carefully put it in his breast pocket.

"Put that back at once," he shouted.

Chester turned to him with a smile. "I think not," he said.

Cosway's ill temper, roused by the unprece-

dented events of the night, lent him unwonted activity. "Am I to make you?" he demanded, rising. Chester laughed, with no appearance of ill humor. The possession of the miniature brought with it a sense of rest. "My dear man," he observed, "why not take a reasonable view of things? I'm years younger than you; at Yale I held for three years the heavy-weight boxing championship and I'm in moderately good condition even now. I am not going to part with my wife's portrait, and I should be more than sorry to have to tussle with an old man, but of the two alternatives I should choose the latter."

Cosway made a dive for the bell. "We'll see if there are any other strong-arm men downstairs who can beat you at that," he cried.

Very gently Chester deposited him in a chair. "Have you considered," he asked, "what a splendid newspaper story this would make for the papers? Would it help professionally to let the authorities into it?"

The old lawyer pointed to the stairs. "Go," he commanded. "My conscience tells me I am not to blame for the company I am in."

"I quite understand your position," said Chester genially, "and it's not an easy one. But

have you thought of mine? Here am I by a series of accidents married to that entrancingly pretty girl and then bidden to depart without a single recollection of her. Wouldn't you want just such a remembrance as I've got in my pocket?"

The old man looked up into the pleasant face of the stranger and forgot, in the sound of the even, well-modulated voice and the sight of the erect young figure, the head from which the hair was receding. And his own vanished youth, these fifty years gone, seemed like a pleasant green spot in a parched land. He sighed and his face softened. "It's a bad business," he muttered.

"But you'd have done the same?" Chester insisted. "Wouldn't you?"

"I'm afraid I should," he admitted; then he became more serious. "But I shall have to tell her," he said. "She'll know it has been taken."

Chester took the old man's hand. "You are bound by no oaths of secrecy." As he shut the door after him Chester perceived that the elevator was waiting opposite and he crossed the corridor and entered it. He was the solitary passenger. On the downward journey he glanced idly into the mirror opposite and saw staring back at him

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a stranger. He clapped his hand instantly to his head.

“Good heavens!” he cried aghast. “Meadows’ wig!”

And since the sons of men have at the age of one and thirty still some share of natural vanity, he heaped maledictions on the fate that had left the invaluable Meadows hairless and himself the sport of ironical fate. No wonder, he thought, that she hinted he was full old for the beginning of a career!

CHAPTER V

THE BEGINNING OF CONQUEST

"Difficulties are the things that show what men are. For the future, on any difficulty, remember that God, like a master of exercise, has engaged you with a rough antagonist." — *Epictetus*.

WHEN the excellent Meadows, on his way to hotel and wife, bade a sorrowful farewell to the man he had faithfully served for ten years, he was not without hope that Chester's dreams of success were to be realized. When all the many bills were paid, Chester found himself with an ample wardrobe and the sum of two hundred dollars. What immediate course to pursue exercised him greatly. He knew that his knowledge of horseflesh and the like was insufficient in competition with professionals to gain him more than a living wage. With a larger capital he would have set out for Alaska, where men with a little money and rugged health may make careers; but he had been warned that to reach this distant land with nothing left was but to sell his strength to more fortunate adventurers.

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The acquisition of wisdom is proverbially worth buying with good coin, and Chester found that his two hundred dollars was enough merely to gain a clearer knowledge of his position in a sphere where no excuse was accepted, no influence known and no mistake overlooked. In the baking days of a summer that saw him tramping in search of work from the Battery to the Bronx, instead of spending it comfortably playing polo at Point Judith, he learned that Meadows had been wise in his doubts, and Enderby sincere when he advised him to disabuse his mind of the idea that fortune-making in competition with better trained men was an easy matter.

He had dropped out of the world that was formerly his, without difficulty. Since most young men of fortune adopt more or less stereotyped sports, customs, resorts, and places of exercise, he was able to avoid the thoroughfares in which they would be met. It was a week after his marriage, when he was still sanguine and equipped with funds, that he paid his first down-town visit to Wardour Enderby. To his surprise, he was not instantly ushered into the lawyer's presence, but bidden, curtly, to wait his turn. This was little enough to his liking; but when Enderby,

passing from one office to another, greeted him with a brief nod, he ascribed it to the fact that he was no longer Chester of Clubland and Society, but a penniless struggler. In reality, Enderby's attitude was that of any busy man towards one calling idly to see him during a full day. Half an hour later, when Richard, after fuming in an outer office, was shown into the lawyer's inner room, his frame of mind was not an equable one.

He returned Enderby's greeting without any show of cordiality.

"I hope I can guess what you've come about," said the man of law.

"And I hope you can't," Richard retorted.

"Isn't it to say you want to hear more about the firm of Enderby and Chester, then?"

"Something absolutely different," Richard informed him. "I want to know if you'll act for me in a delicate matter. It's not exactly your line, I suppose, but there's nobody else I could trust it to."

"Glad to," said Enderby, briefly. "Fire ahead."

"My wife," returned Chester, calmly, "is suing me for divorce, and I am making no defense. Cosway and Cosway are acting for her."

"You — married!" cried Enderby.

"Isn't that essential to divorce?" Chester said.

"Tell me about it," the lawyer commanded.

"I'm afraid I can't," his client observed.

"It's a matter which I cannot mention even to you. I know it is an unprofessional thing for a man of your standing to attend to, but when I had to give Cosway the address of my representative, I thought of you, and perhaps presumed too much on our old acquaintance." He looked at the other sharply. "It's not too late for you to refuse."

Enderby waved his hand impatiently. "Who spoke of refusing?" he snapped. "It isn't that, Chester, it's a sudden feeling that I can never really have known you." His was a profession which showed men and women at their worst. He had welcomed men of reputed probity in this very room and seen them strip off every vestige of honor and disclose themselves unashamedly bad. Few illusions were left to him. He had loved and lost, and the Tennysonian couplet about the advantages of this awoke but undisguised contempt in him. The best part of his nature was centred in his friendship for two or three men,

of whom Richard Chester came first. When he had proffered a partnership in his firm, it was as much that by so doing he would not lose sight of him, as hope that the partnership would financially benefit him. There was no man he thought he knew so intimately until this moment. He had admired Chester for the supposed cleanness of his life in a set where too much money had not always made for virtue, and now it was a shock to find that there was some skeleton in his closet. And that his friend of many years should have confided in him so little and kept back so much savored too nearly of the client and too little of the comrade.

“Of course I’ll act for you,” he said at length. “What’s your address?”

Chester thought he detected a lack of cordiality and interest, and rose to his feet in his stiffest manner.

“He’s ashamed for having trusted me so little,” sighed poor Enderby, “for having deceived me so much!”

“He’s ashamed of knowing a man who is down,” thought Chester. “I have no permanent address,” said he aloud; “I thought if I called in here occasionally, I could see how things were going on.”

Enderby made some notes on a pad. "All right," he said; "if I'm not in, ask for Biggs, the office manager."

Chester shouldered his way along Wall Street, cherishing for the first time, hard thoughts of his friend. His acquaintance with Enderby had begun in a curious manner. Six years ago, he had been at the Mineola Horse Show and had seen from the programme that a new entrant was competing in the class devoted to park fours. An exceedingly good whip, and at this time owner of four chestnuts which were earning blue ribbons at the important shows, he strolled round to see the new man's turn-out. Long-barreled beasts with hardly a point of the typical coacher about them, they were equine caricatures. As he gazed at them, a short, kindly-faced man with gold rimmed glasses came timidly toward him. Enderby had seen Chester often enough to know all about him.

"What do you think of them?" he asked.

Chester had neither seen nor heard of Enderby — it was before the wealthy lawyer had made his bid for clubland popularity — and was possessed of the most decided opinions on horseflesh.

"If I were of a nervous disposition," he re-

turned, brutally, "I should go into hysterics. Whose collection has been robbed?"

"They're mine," said Enderby apologetically. "I bought them from one of the biggest dealers."

"That's nothing," said Chester. "They'll sell you Percherons and call them polo ponies, if you don't know the difference. Called these true to type English coach horses, I suppose?"

"He did," admitted the other, now thoroughly uncomfortable, "and my man, who came well recommended, said they were too."

"My dear sir," said Chester, who had little pity for men deceived so obviously, "did you ever reflect that your man might have got as much in commission as you would pay him in six months? I'm in the same class as you — park fours — and I've nothing to fear from your exhibit, but if you don't want to be laughed at, just withdraw them."

"What shall I do?" asked Enderby, shorn of his hopes.

Chester looked them over critically. "They have their good points," he conceded, "and you needn't give them away, but as a matched four they're impossible. If you want to exhibit, buy others."

"How can I?" demanded the lawyer, anxiously.

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Chester took his visiting card, and scribbled on it the name of a dealer.

“Tell him if he doesn’t fix you up with a team I should be proud to own, he’ll get no more business with me.”

Enderby had been absurdly grateful to Richard for this and had later become an intimate friend. And it was of this incident that Chester thought as he made his way back to his room. It spurred him to a new ambition. He banished a legal future and thought more of that rich, bleak Northwest where he might find a fortune and return to those habits of life he even now began to miss exceedingly.

He thought he could see in Enderby’s manner an expression of disbelief in his powers to make his way. He gritted his teeth and swore that to nobody would he owe gratitude for help. It should never be his lot to come with hard luck stories to old friends. It was an admirable resolution, but it left him still hungry and he made his way to the Astor Library, there to plan his moves for tomorrow. He had found that in this great building he was never likely to meet a former friend. It proved a refuge to him alike in heat and in cold and was as near an approach to a

club as he could afford, and he was accorded perfect courtesy so long as he obeyed the rules. Retribution came, to such as offended, in the person of a middle-aged, gray-bearded man who appeared now and again and scanned the room with a critical eye. To those who were reading newspapers — a heinous sin in the sight of the library authorities — or raised their voices above a whisper, or made bold to snatch hasty refectation at the tables, verbal reproof was justly administered.

One Sunday, when the answering of unsuitable advertisements had bereft him of time and money and his old life lay three months behind and his knowledge of specious cries for help prevented him any longer from striving to be one of the gentlemen of good address to whom large salaries were offered, he came upon an advertisement which he considered in a favorable light.

“Wanted, a gentlemanly man over twenty in a publishing house. Must be willing to start at bottom and work way up. Splendid opportunity for right man. X E. 19th St., City.”

It said honestly that he must work. Well, he was willing to work, and by this time, from the bottom up. It hinted at opportunities, and better

still, there seemed no likelihood of his having to sell something. He had answered hundreds of advertisements which had the word salesman concealed in them, and he had no inspirations as to success in this line of activity. In reply to his letter, he was bidden to call upon the firm, and found to his regret that it was not a house of national repute, but one of which he had never heard. In an outer office were some twenty men, all willing to start from the ground up. They bore for the greater part the marks which hopelessness and shabbiness lend. One applicant there was distinguished by better clothes and a better bearing, and with him Chester was sent into the office of the sales-manager. They were motioned to the two chairs the little compartment boasted and the manager turned in his seat and surveyed them closely.

"Now," he said easily, "I wonder if you two know how many answers I had to my advertisement." He paused impressively. "It was way up in the three hundreds. I couldn't waste time to open 'em all, but of what I did read, yours pleased me the best because they were well written. I don't mean penmanship — that cuts no ice on this job — but I mean expressed,"

"What is the proposition?" asked Chester's companion. "Book agent?"

The sales-manager nodded. "Yep, but not the ordinary style. This is the greatest book proposition on the market, and if you fellows are half as sharp as I think you are, you can easy make a hundred dollars a week."

Chester looked doubtful. "I thought it was indoor work," he returned.

"And what would you be worth at indoor work?" demanded the other. "I see by your letter you've had mighty little experience. Where's the easy mark to offer you the chance of earning a hundred dollars a week for indoor work? Indoors you'd be worth just about five dollars to me, but outside there's no limit to what you might earn." He ran his finger down a ruled column. "Now here's a man," he asserted, "who cleared a hundred and fifteen last week and ninety-five the week before. He's one of the Jersey City bunch and never sold a thing till he came with me. He wanted indoor work, too. I'm going to promote him."

Chester pricked up his ears. Here were the opportunities the advertisement modestly hinted. "How?" he demanded,

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“Make him manager of a branch agency,” said the other, “and give him a commission on each salesman’s work. I shall get a commission on you two, if you make good.” He laughed in triumph. “I done pretty good last year on a proposition not near as good as this and bought an eight-room house with all conveniences in Jersey.”

Chester was not sure whether to regard this as a warning or an inducement; but the thought of the Jersey City agent who had his own ideas about indoor work and earned two hundred dollars in a fortnight, had a comforting sound. He had found in his search for work that the indoor man has no opportunities at all commensurate with those offered to the successful salesman, whether he sold shares or soap. And he did not know that the special pains the sales-manager took with him was due entirely to his assured manner and the very excellent cut of his clothes. The difference between the well dressed seller and the poorly clad one is marked. One is a salesman and the other a peddler.

Chester’s companion — Everard Peck, late of Cornell — had attempted selling before and expressed himself anxious to hear fuller particulars.

The sales-manager thereupon drew from a leathern cover a handsomely bound, slim book and cleared his throat.

"This," he commenced, "contains specimen pages and the most attractive illustrations of the work you are to sell. It will be complete in fifty-two volumes, each containing seven hundred and fifty pages of reading matter and one hundred and sixteen full page illustrations, many of which are in four colors. It is the standard history of the human race, depicting all that is known to modern ethnologists of the early life of pre-historic man down to the achievements of Edison, Kelvin and Curie. While stocked in the repletest manner with the wisdom of our staff of university professors, and while it is welcomed by the cultured, it is yet of such entrancing nature as to hold in rapt attention the lisping child who has but lately learned to read. To those who have had no proper educational opportunities, to those whose commercial exigencies have banished college studies, to the busy journalist, the statesman, the business man or mechanic, this work comes as a godsend. To the student at college or the pupil at school there has never been such an opportunity to acquire exact knowledge written

in an easy, flowing style, and it is not too much to say that the dissemination of such a work will do more to promote national culture than a minute study of the hundred best books devised by the wit of man."

The sales-manager paused for breath and reached for some blank forms, which he handed to his auditors. "These give all the information you need to know. Study it out and come back and see me this afternoon. I shall expect Chester at three and Peck at half-past. And let me tell you this," he added, "if you've got sand, you can knock five hundred a month out of this."

Chester found himself the victim of unusual enthusiasm and beheld Alaskan scenery drawing near. To be singled out of three hundred applicants and offered such opportunities, convinced him, that his luck had turned. Peck listened to him less sanguine of triumph. "It's a hard game," said Peck, late of Cornell.

Chester rebuked his lack of faith. "Surely not when we have a genuinely good thing to sell." From which it will be seen that he was but new at the game and ripening for disappointment.

At three o'clock, the sales-manager received him as an old and valued friend. He leaned

back in his chair and discoursed on what he was pleased to call the psychology of salesmanship. "As you get wise to the game," said this talented man, "you'll find your own line of talk. I don't care how you slip it so long as you've the idea to rights. You can't coax a man into buying and you can't bully him; you've just got to make him feel that he's been waiting for these books and you're the first guy to blow in and give him the chance." He looked at Chester with a smile. "Seems kind of easy to sit here and sell books in your mental vision, don't it? But I want to tell you right here that it's a hard game. I don't say that to discourage you but because I don't want you to think that you've just got to let loose your eloquence and then make a certain sale. The other fellow never wants to buy. Just let that soak in, will you? He hates like hell to part with his ready money, but you've got to work him up to it. It's just a game the way I look at it. How does it strike you?"

"As hard," returned Chester.

"It is," assented the other. "The only things you can sell easy in little old New York is gold bricks, and they go like hot cakes when a swell dresser hands 'em out with a fine line of patter.

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But there's more in books in the long run. I got my chance on subscription books and now I've a modern, eight-room house, all improvements, on Fourth Street, Union Hill. You must come up some Sunday and meet the boys. When I started out I knew as much about selling books as you do. See here, now, you pretend to sell me these books. Let's see what you make of it."

Chester looked at him dubiously. In cold blood the thing seemed far from easy, but he recognized it as a test that must be undergone.

"Do you want to buy —" he commenced.

"Cut it out," said his mentor. "Nobody wants to buy. Try again."

"I have an excellent set of books," Chester began.

"Forget it," cried the manager. "Now, my boy, you just listen to me and put in all the objections you can think of and you'll see how I answer them."

Chester listened amazed. The man talked at an astonishing pace. Like the bishop in the Bab Ballads, he "argued high, he argued low, he also argued round about him." Chester's feeble protests that he had neither time nor money were swept aside like snow before summer suns. In

five minutes, he was absolutely convinced that his only hope for success in this life and salvation in another was to subscribe instantly. The sales-manager listened carelessly to the tribute afforded him. The victory was too easy to think of with pride.

"I don't expect you to do it as well as me, yet," he said, "but if you've the savvy to learn from your mistakes, you'll do." He looked at his watch. "I've got five minutes before I see your friend and you just fire ahead and ask for help on doubtful points. That's what I draw my salary for, to help my agents."

Rapidly Chester thought of possible situations. "Supposing," he asked, "I get talking to two people, man and wife say, do I stick to one or try to interest them both?"

"A few skilful questions will show who's master," the other said, "and when you find out, aim all your shot at that one. Never waste ammunition on a dead one. And there's another thing worth remembering; always look at the hats and coats in the hall. That ought to be a guide as to whether there's children. If there is, it makes the sale easier. This is a kid's age."

"But there's nothing to be said in some cases.

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If a woman says she must consult her husband, who is not at home, for instance."

"Easy, my boy," cried the sales-manager, "dead easy. You can most always tell when that old lie is coming and then you get in your fine work. Just put on a smile and tell her what a mistake you made with the lady who's got the flat upstairs. Tell her when you suggested that the other woman, before she signed the contract, might want to consult her husband, your party went up in the air and said 'Do you suppose I have to consult my husband about twenty-five cents a week?' The sales-manager smiled. "That does the trick."

Under the glamor of this talk and the thought that through the dissemination of literature he might win to Alaska, Chester took his specimen pages and order blanks and was allotted as territory the apartment houses between Columbus Avenue and Central Park, West, from 100th Street to 104th Street.

"There's one thing more," said the manager, handing him three closely typed pages. "I've had these instructions to agents written out as a help. It's a few hints I found useful, and you had better adopt them, till you're wiser. They're

private and must be returned to me personally. Report tomorrow at five o'clock."

Peck, of Cornell, waiting his turn, saw Chester's package and his new look of hope. "Bully for you," he exclaimed, "and good luck."

The instructions to salesmen were diffuse and contained a great deal of rugged sense. "Look pleasant," was one of the axioms, "and smile when you're telling your proposition. Owls look solemn but they don't make sales." "Be enthusiastic," another commanded him. "A salesman who can't get good and enthusiastic, couldn't sell harp strings in heaven."

Chester digested these and the specimen pages of his book with much diligence. He had never perused a work which told him so many useful things he didn't know. He had been bidden to start working his territory at half-past nine; it seemed scandalously early, but his instructions were definite. The smile which he had been commended to assume and study in the mirror was tried on the car conductor, who scowled in return as though his passenger were taking an unwarrantable liberty. An excusable trepidation took hold on him when he came to his first apartment house, but even here his *vade mecum* was

of service. "Never," said this invaluable guide, "pause in the hallway as if you were in doubt or ashamed of yourself. You are not peddling shoe laces; you are advancing the great cause of education. But if the janitor gets on to your game, go next door first. N. B. It's more difficult working elevator apartments. Wait till the elevator goes up and then try the stairs. Colored boys get on to you quicker than white ones."

But the first house had neither disturbing janitor nor scrutinizing elevator boy. Copying the tenants' names as per instructions, he ascended to the top floor and paused before what, if he had not been misled by names, was the dwelling of Mrs. Brannigan. He remembered his introductory phrases perfectly; these were what he must use until he found his own line of talk. Mrs. Brannigan, untidy beyond belief, opened the door. He cleared his throat.

"Good morning, Mrs. Brannigan," he commenced. "Doubtless you have noticed that the children have quite a deal to do at school, now."

His monitor followed this phrase with the advice, "Here pause and get a line on her thoughts."

The lady looked at him chillingly. "I'm Miss O'Grady," she snapped, "and I never had no chil-

dren." And then she slammed the door in his face before he could point out that either her grammar or her morals must be at fault. He looked through his book for aid on a situation like this but there was nothing to help him. But he noticed that he had made a grave mistake. These words stared him in the face: "Never talk at the door; you can make your best impression in the parlor." He pictured Miss O'Grady in her parlor forgiving his dower of children and becoming by degrees as enthusiastic as he over the book.

The next lady, Mrs. Vitale of Northern Italy, was highly suspicious; and when Chester made a move for the parlor, she headed him off into a little cupboard where were brooms and potatoes and a child's express wagon.

"Good morning, Mrs. Vitale," he commenced courteously. "Doubtless you have noticed that the children have quite a good deal to do at school, now?" He made the necessary pause but got no line on her thoughts. He felt that she was not playing the game fairly and produced his wares and spoke of the joy to be obtained by their possession. The children looked eagerly at the pictures and were his eloquent supporters.

But they soon deserted him when their mother told them, in Italian, that tomorrow she would buy them something better at the ten cent store.

With the lady on the next floor he had even less success. He was, perhaps, too feverishly eager to gain the parlor to inspire her with belief in his integrity. She eyed him coldly and gave him one minute to leave her premises and spoke scathing things concerning education.

The next victim listened to his first phrase and then remarked, "They don't get enough to suit me. Why, when I was a girl up in Vermont —" Her reminiscences, though interesting, promised him no sale, and he paused before another door and rallied his fleeting courage. "I will," he muttered with gritted teeth, "I will get into that confounded parlor." And in his eagerness, he forgot to use the opening phrase until he had won the haven. The woman followed him and listened amiably. "I thought you was the gas man," she remarked simply. "Have a seat, young man."

Chester was inspired. He talked of all the great men whose lives mirrored in this wondrous work would aid all young Americans to do great and noble things. When he had finished he was hoarse. He wiped a perspiring brow when what

the sales-manager had called the "psychological moment," arrived. The lady received the contract blank without aversion. "My daughter's spending the day with some friends out in Jersey," she remarked. "Come around again tomorrow."

Repetitions of these interviews followed and he shook off the dust of the building and walked a block East to start anew. He was conscious that he had made many mistakes and was grateful for this cheering sentence in his book, "If," he read, "you made one sale in three without fail, you'd have old John D., Andy and J. Pierpont giving up the trust business and applying for your job." Wise counsel, this, in the hour of need. The next apartment house was of a better class and he dodged the elevator boy successfully and came to the top floor. He drew blank and descended to the next landing. Here he experienced a surprise. As he knocked, the door flew open and a voluminous Juno, clad in a heliotrope colored kimono opened it, her countenance the while irradiated with a seraphic smile which far eclipsed his own stereotyped effort at light-heartedness. But it faded away quickly when she saw the man at the door was not the one she expected and Chester

judged her irritation would beget a mood wherein his salesman efforts would be unwelcome.

Presently he came to a man newly risen from bed. "I work all night," said the man, glaring at him fiercely, "and I try to sleep all day, and so I could but for you damned book agents. You fellows just drive me crazy. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"I am," said Chester sadly, leaving him, a wrathful apparition, framed in the open doorway.

In the next apartment a man and a woman were breakfasting. A little servant opened the door and offered frail opposition to his desire to reach the parlor. He paused awkwardly when he discovered the trespass. From the many photographs about, he judged the couple to be in some branch of the theatrical profession. They gazed at him with annoyance. It was an anxious moment. The book told him by adroit questioning he was to find out who was the stronger spirit and address remarks to that one. "Good morning," he said presently, and made the fatal error of allowing his specimen book to be seen. "Doubtless —" "Get to hell out of here," roared the man. Chester had discovered the master mind. The

man turned to a slumbering bull dog. "Sic him," he cried. But the intruder was friend to all dogdom and the animal, after yawning, arose and licked his hand and even prepared to accompany him in his retreat.

The afternoon's experiences were no brighter than those of the morning. There seemed a concerted effort on the part of these people to exclude invaluable volumes from their homes, and he reported at five o'clock, feeling that the sales-manager would be much disappointed.

"I haven't sold a subscription," he said dismally.

The other laughed. "I didn't suppose you would," he retorted. "Or tomorrow, either, for that matter, but you've just got to go on trying. You can't break into a paying game like this, directly you take it up. Why, that agent in Jersey City what I told you about didn't make any sales, till he'd been with me two weeks. Wanted to give it up a dozen times and get back to Squeedunk and the farm. Then he struck his gait same as you will and went along like a house afire."

These words were balm to Chester and he absorbed fresh counsel and started with fresh hope

on the morrow. But each day of the week was like the first. Everywhere he was coldly received and often insulted. Occasionally he thought he was near a sale but such hopes never came to fruition. People were interested in him but not in his proposition, and he lacked that convincing quality without which one may not be a salesman. Fellow workers said critically of him that he had not "gall" enough and, at the end of ten days' failure, he was fain to adopt this view. He risked no final interview with the comforting manager of sales but returned his specimen and contract blanks by the office boy and walked to Central Park. It was the last week in September, when wealthy New Yorkers were, for the most part, still away from town and he was likely to meet nobody who knew him. He was surprised with what ease he could avoid the friends of other days. Had he been a seeker for work from an alien land, he could not have been more alone.

He walked aimlessly through the Park, no longer in the motor era the throng of fashion, and presently came to the little lake hard by one of the Fifth Avenue entrances, and sat down by it.

His thoughts went back to the day a few months earlier when he had cheerfully protested his hope of salvation by work. They had been right who had doubted him, he mused, and the world was no nearer the conquering. With this black mood upon him, he paid little attention to his surroundings and was startled presently to hear a squeak and behold almost at his feet a gray squirrel regarding him with friendly eyes. A minute later the little animal had sprung on the seat and come boldly toward him, suffering his back to be stroked. Then came another as free from fear as the first and perched on his shoulder. And a third, leaping over the grass, joined his fellows and looked at him with bright, beady eyes. And they brought a strange, pleasant sense of companionship with them that lightened his heart and took his black mood away and let him see the beauty of the day.

He looked at them with a tenderness that surprised him and felt as perhaps the gentle, brown-habited Saint of Assisi had felt seven centuries before toward his little brothers, the birds of the air. "You're good little chaps," he assured them when he found that they had constituted themselves his friends, "and if ever I can, I'll make

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a change in the Chester arms. We've got three stupid wyverns on a shield. I'll have three squirrels instead. Hallo, what's the matter?"

They had scampered down from the seat and were making toward some friendly trees. Chester looked up to see a small boy running toward him, breathless. Park squirrels have no especial confidence in unattended small boys and Chester did not look amiably at the disturber. "Well?" he demanded not very amiably. "What's the trouble?"

"'Ginia's got a nail in her shoe and can't walk," the small boy declared.

"Who's 'Ginia?" Chester asked more kindly; he was now convinced that the lad was not guilty of hard thoughts to the new ornaments to the Chester coat of arms.

"My sister," returned the small boy. "She's only a little girl. You've got to carry her."

"That's the idea, is it? Where shall I carry her?"

The child waved his hand airily to the tall houses over the road. "We live there," he said.

"But where's your sister?" Chester asked.

The boy put his hand in the other's and led him along the path, chatting the while excitedly.

"You see," he explained, "if she walks, she'll get lockjaw very likely. You generally get lockjaw if a nail goes into your toes; and if she gets it, she'll have to have her teeth knocked in to get the food down. I suppose you've seen heaps of people with lockjaw."

"Not one." Chester could see that his answer had disappointed.

"And if it's not lockjaw, it will be blood-poison, and then she'll have her leg cut off. Have you ever seen a very little girl with a wooden leg?"

"I'm afraid not," returned Chester with an air of apology.

'Ginia proved to be an exceedingly pretty little child of five, very richly dressed. There were tears, hardly dry, upon her face. It was inconceivable to Chester that they should be unattended.

"Where's your nurse?" he demanded.

"We ran away from her," 'Ginia answered composedly. "She wasn't interesting. She wouldn't let me put my feet in the water. You would, wouldn't you?"

Chester refused to be drawn into a conversation which reeked of disrespect toward proper authority. "What about your foot?" he asked.

"I can't walk," she said; "there's a nail in my toe."

The boy assumed a professional air. "And that's why I think it's lockjaw," he said.

Chester unbuttoned a little, white suede shoe and saw on the ball of the toe a red spot of blood. He looked at it, critically.

"What do you think it is?" the boy demanded. "Lockjaw or blood-poison?"

"Neither," Chester asserted with the air of a consulting surgeon. "All it wants is to be bathed with hot water."

"Sha'n't I get chicken broth and port wine jelly?" 'Ginia asked with an appearance of anxiety.

"I hope so," he returned. "I should insist on it, if I were you. Now, as it will soon be your bedtime, I'll take you home." He put the shoe in his pocket and lifted the girl to his shoulder and followed the boy out of the entrance gate and up Fifth Avenue. Presently the boy gave a shout of delight. "There's auntie," he said. "She always comes to find us when we get lost."

"And never calls us mischievous little devils," 'Ginia observed calmly. "I once asked God to make her our mother," she continued, "but I

spoke too late, as usual." She had a singularly sophisticated air for her years. Chester was glad to see that the boy had run to meet his aunt. She would be the earlier relieved of fearing a serious accident. He could see that the aunt was beautifully gowned and bore out his belief that the children were of the wealthy classes. But when she looked at Chester he nearly let his burden drop, for the lovely girl gazing up at 'Ginia was the woman he had married. He was conscious that she was thanking him and that an answer was demanded. He was too confused to notice what she was saying. He narrowly prevented himself from uttering the fatuous phrase which had prefaced his conversations of the last ten days.

"You must let me carry her," said the girl.

He looked at her slight figure and shook his head. "I'm so much better fitted for it," he answered, and marched on to the great house where the children lived.

Would she recognize him, he wondered, and think this part of a plan to see her and break his promise? She had looked at him without any suspicion, thinking merely that he was a kindly-disposed young man of the class to which she belonged, who had taken pity on her niece.

He looked at her when he was become more composed with a growing admiration. In animation her face was lovelier than ever and the well fitting dress she wore made her infinitely attractive. And he sighed when he thought how much greater distance she was now from him than he had ever deemed possible.

At the door she held out her hand. "I'm sure their mother, Mrs. Godfrey, would be very glad to thank you if you care to come in," she said.

"Thanks, I won't trouble her," he returned and took his leave.

CHAPTER VI

MILLIONAIRES AND MINES

“ When we are invited to an entertainment, we take what we find; and if any one should bid the master of the house set fish or tarts before him, he would be thought absurd. Yet, in the world, we ask the gods for what they do not give us, and that though they have given us so many things.” — *Epictetus*.

CYRIL and Virginia Godfrey were the children of Norah's first cousin, who had died when the younger was only a few months old. His widow had not taken another mate, fearing any responsibilities which might interfere with her lazy and aimless existence. She was profoundly grateful that Norah Ellis, when her grandfather's legacy put her in a happier financial state, had consented to give up her apartment and reside in the Godfrey house, as Norah was so much better able to take charge of a large household than Mrs. Godfrey, who did not inspire servants with love or esteem.

It was Norah who, when the tearful nurse made her way back without her charges, calmed the mother's anxieties and sallied forth to find them.

And when in triumph she took them to their mother she was fulfilling only what was confidently expected of her. When she had fondled them and threatened dire punishments for similar future offenses, she sent them to bed and turned to her cousin.

"Charlie Renalls 'phoned to say he would dine here tonight," she said. "That's the second time this week."

"We've no one to meet him," returned Norah; "that's a pity."

Mrs. Godfrey laughed. "He won't consider it as such."

Charles Renalls was one of the younger men in the financial world content to wait without visible impatience for the fall of septuagenarian giants. Of obscure origin and moderate education, he had forced himself to be respected by great capitalists. Starting as a company promoter in a small way, he was now president of the Inter-State Trust Company and known to be one of those far-seeing capitalists who believed in the great future of South America. The Directory of Directors showed him to be the president of five mining companies in Brazil and the Argentine.

An ugly man, but with power in every line of his face, that made him of more than common interest, he had two hobbies. As a pigeon-shot he was absolutely first class, and there were few better amateur violinists. His collection of violins was world famous.

Although known as a bold speculator, he was never associated with any of the get-rich-quick schemes that have undone so many young financiers of talent. He had seen that crooked courses and shady episodes in the lives of great capitalists do not bring them to the place of honor he coveted. Long before she had known him, Norah Ellis had admired his fighting qualities. There was in her the capacity for understanding that soldiers of finance have their campaigns, their skirmishes, pitched battles, victories or retreats much as do their brothers of the tented field. And to her there was something infinitely more entrancing in the spectacle of the financial fighter living always amid war's alarms, than of the other to whom war was but an occasional incident.

Someone had pointed Renalls out to her at an Ysaye concert as a foolish young man who had dared to assert himself. He was a child among sage men, her companion affirmed, and would be

broken. She watched the newspaper accounts of the fray and rejoiced to see that Renalls won. He did not win because he was a better man than his antagonists but because they had gone into battle with insolent unpreparedness. He was wise enough after this not to cross swords with them, and it was after this warning that he turned to South American fields not pre-empted by this ring of financial aristocrats. He was so frequently quoted as the South American mining magnate that people lost sight of his growing power in Manhattan.

And had it not been for that rich and ancient colony of Portugal, Brazil, he might never have met with Norah Ellis. There had come to him one day a young man, Juan Mendoza, by name, clerk in a great Rio banking house, and representing his cousin, Esteban Mendoza, until recently engineer in charge of a section of the Braganza State Railroad, then in course of construction. Working under this engineer was an Indian foreman of negroes whose frequent lapses into drunkenness had led to his dismissal. Failing of reinstatement, he appealed over the head of his section boss to the man in charge. Mendoza refused to interfere. When the Indian saw that

he would not be able to buy the vile spirit sold to the men, he drew from his pocket a nugget of gold of the size of a hen's egg and asked Mendoza to purchase it. He asked five dollars for this. He was offered twice that if he would say where it was found.

"I know," said the man, "a mountain of it." Mendoza procured leave of absence and verified the native's statement. And from that moment until, six months later, he died of alcoholic poisoning, the Indian was never sober. Mendoza was thus the sole repository of the secret. All this incredible story Juan Mendoza poured into Renalls' ears. His cousin, he said, could not get the attention of the great capitalists, who refused to believe that gold could be found in any part of Brazil except the state of Minaes Geraes, which has been worked since the earliest days. He dared not give information which would lead to prospecting parties being organized and the gold discovered. He was forced to wait until some rich men believed him and financed the undertaking. And it was of Charles Renalls he had thought.

The New Yorker listened to this tale as he had listened to many others of similar nature. The

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first inkling that there might be something in it was the large sum Esteban Mendoza wanted for his concession. As a rule the humble inventor or discoverer was a timorous individual, but Mendoza wanted a great price and would not abate one jot of it.

Renalls treated the South American, used to the almost exaggerated courtesy of his kind, with his usual lack of manners. "Come back in the morning and I'll talk to you," he said, "and keep your mouth shut, if you want to do business with me."

But Juan Mendoza never went back. He had arranged to use the code of his bank to cable to his cousin and went straightway to the New York counsel of the bank — a Mr. Cosway — to write his wire. While he was thanking the lawyer for his courtesy and exhibiting the great nugget, Norah Ellis chanced to come into the office and straightway took fire at the story and made provisional agreement with Juan acting for his cousin. In vain did the conservative Cosway urge fuller consideration; but his client had her own way of doing things and within a month was part owner of the North Brazil Goldfields and possessed of the greatest belief in its future.

Renalls, waiting impatiently for the Portu-

guese to return, learned that he had been beaten by a woman and was furious. Mendoza's story had not been without its fascination even for him and he swore to get even with her. When an opportunity arose to meet her at a social function he accepted, supposing that he would discover a middle-aged woman of few attractions. Instead he met Norah Ellis and fell in love with her. The North Brazil Goldfields would come to him just as easily through marriage, he concluded. He was a constant visitor to the Godfrey house now Norah was living there, and it was in the character of a suitor avowed that he was dining there tonight. Mrs. Godfrey always thought of him as a relative by marriage, of whom she could make use. Inspired by Norah's success as a business woman, she attempted little operations in the stock markets, which came to naught so long as she relied upon her own judgment. Charles Renalls seemed always ready to advise her when she asked him; and since his counsel always brought her good fortune, she was anxious to keep his friendship. She was sometimes a little annoyed that Norah seemed indifferent to his feelings for her.

"You ought to be flattered," she said. "He

doesn't care to dine at many houses. A lot of women run after him."

"Very creditable of them," Norah commented. "It must increase his respect for our sex."

Renalls had been in the house a few minutes only when young Ronald Monmouth was announced. The financier looked at him sourly. He was not jealous of him, since it was no secret that he was of the rejected, but while he stayed there were none of the little intimate conversations that were so sweet to the older man. For Monmouth's father Renalls had a certain respect, but for his sons, who were merely ornamental, he had none. And Monmouth, none too pleased at this opinion openly expressed, and seeing in the other a man who might succeed where he had failed, experienced always a sense of gratification if he could stir up jealousy in him.

The dinner found Renalls in his usually quiet, contained mood. He had not always rejoiced in this self-possession. As a younger man, at a Chamber of Commerce dinner he had rallied with good-humored contempt a great scholar who sat opposite to him, silent through the many courses. Renalls in those days was not used to champagne or the company of Wall Street mag-

nates and, as the dinner wore on, felt eloquent stirrings within him. He was always impatient of the learning which some men pretended to respect but which yet brought its possessor no temporal benefits. The silence of the old man opposite him became oppressive and he leaned over the table and asked him whether it was from want of words or from folly that he remained so quiet. The old man looked at him from under heavy, gray eyebrows. "There was another young man who asked the great Solon that," he answered.

"What did Solon say?" demanded Renalls, and many listened for his answer.

The old man regarded him with a grim look. "'No fool,' said Solon, 'can be silent at a feast.'"

It was a lesson which Renalls never forgot; and when the savant, from the failure of his publishers, fell upon evil days, and a subscription was raised to assure his euthanasia, the thousand dollars sent anonymously to the fund came from the man he had publicly rebuked.

Renalls listened to Mrs. Godfrey's account of the accident to Virginia and regretted that she had not thanked the heroic rescuer. He always

professed deep interest in the Godfrey children, and remarked that he was glad no worse accident had happened.

Norah interrupted a little impatiently. "It was not such a hard task to carry Virginia a few hundred yards."

"Was he young and handsome?" Ronald Monmouth demanded.

"I really hardly noticed," she returned. "He seemed a tall, well dressed man of twenty-eight or so."

"It's extraordinary the way you meet mysterious strangers," he commented.

"What do you mean?" demanded Renalls. "How does she meet mysterious strangers?" He looked suspiciously at Monmouth.

Ronald had intended such a question should be asked. "Just before Norah left the Beau Sejour to come here we called in one night and met a curious collection. Mother has already annexed one named Plumm and asks him in when she's dull and wants amusing. The other sportsman was disguised as a gentleman and wore a wig."

"He didn't," the girl exclaimed.

"I'll bet you what you like he did," said Mon-

mouth. "I thought at the time there was something curious about his make-up, and when I saw a man behind the scenes at the Broadway Theatre the other night making up, I knew what it was. Don't you remember how young his voice was, and wasn't his figure a young man's?"

Renalls looked at her intently. "Is he talking nonsense?" he asked.

"Doesn't he always?" she retorted. She wondered if by any chance her cousin could be right; there had been something curiously young about this man, radiant with the hope that he could carve out a career.

"Where did you meet him, Norah?" Mrs. Godfrey asked.

"He was brought there," she replied.

"Not by Plumm," Monmouth told them: "Plumm says he never met him before. Plumm is looking for him all the time. This mysterious stranger," Monmouth informed his listeners, "had a habit of flinging little packets of bills — five hundred at a time — toward anyone who needed help. Mother was quite angry with Plumm for not producing him. She has fifty-five charities all needing help."

"I didn't say Dr. Plumm brought him," the

girl said rather lamely. She was not anxious to have the events of that evening discussed.

"You mean old Cosway," Monmouth exclaimed. "Poor old Cosway! Who'd have thought that he was to die in a week! Made me feel serious when I heard about it. I was convinced of the evils of idleness, Renalls. I nearly came and asked you to get me a job. Cosway's death must have put you in a hole, Norah."

"On the contrary," she said, "he was extremely methodical and left all his affairs in order. Everything goes like clockwork."

"North Brazil Goldfields and all?" demanded Renalls.

"Mr. Cosway had nothing to do with that," she said. "He had to do with my more intimate affairs."

"He was a good lawyer," Renalls declared. "Once, more to pass the time than anything else, I asked him something about your affairs, Norah. He shut me up in quick time and said your affairs were not to be discussed."

"All the Ellises are secretive," Mrs. Godfrey remarked. "Nobody knows the slightest thing about them."

Norah observed Renalls closely during this

speech. The will of Simon Ellis was open to the world to read, or at any rate to the world's lawyer, but she relied on the fact that it had been proved ten years before and long before she had met Renalls. Its curious provision, Mr. Cosway had assured her, was forgotten by this time and she need fear no publicity.

Renalls judged from a certain constraint in her manner that she was worried about something but assumed it to be her mining venture. He knew that it had already caused her much worry. Occasionally she had broached the subject to him but he had never offered any advice. Often she had hoped he would; sage counsel such as his would often have been invaluable but she had too much pride to ask where he seemed disposed not to give. There had been many misadventures. One of them was in part responsible for her determination to take advantage of her grandfather's legacy.

When the mine was ready to be operated on a larger scale she had bought stamps and necessary heavy machinery. Finding freight charges so high, she had chartered a small British tramp steamer and sent her cargo direct to a nearer landing than could be made by ordinary freighters. Against advice, she did not insure the cargo, and

from the time the vessel passed Sandy Hook she was not spoken with or heard of. New stamps were imperative, and with her new fortune she sent out an expert to construct a cyanide plant. She and Mendoza had determined that the thing was too big for them to run successfully and they purposed, when the new equipment was in operation and the output increasing, to throw the shares on the market, realizing thereby a fortune. Mendoza had found himself unfitted for the conduct of so large an undertaking and his partner was already wearied of having to concentrate so much attention upon it.

She took up Mrs. Godfrey's remark about her secretiveness. "That's because I won't talk about the mine. My dear Alice, one is never a prophet in one's own country. Nobody here believed in the thing, so why should I risk your scorn?"

"I believe in it," Ronald Monmouth declared, "and so do a lot of men I know. They say you're the cleverest woman in America."

"And others," said Renalls, "declare the whole thing is a fake."

Mrs. Godfrey felt bound to contribute her share of knowledge. "And I read a paragraph in the

Financial Leader last week which said there was no gold in North Brazil."

"I know the man who wrote it," Norah exclaimed contemptuously, "and when I want him to write my side he'll do it for the same price. Surely, Alice, you don't believe in those inspired articles?"

"There's often something in them," her cousin returned vaguely.

"I'm content to put my all in it," the girl said confidently.

"It isn't wise," Renalls objected.

"It proves my faith," she replied.

"It's too big for you to handle," Ronald commented. "You're only a girl."

"One takes that as a compliment at a quarter of a century," she laughed. "And as for the capability, I'm far more fit than you, Ronald, to look after business matters."

"Pooh!" Ronald declared airily, "I'm like Renalls, I pay people to do it for me."

"I'm pleased to think," Renalls told him pointedly, "that you resemble me in very few things."

Monmouth looked at him a trifle spitefully. "More than you think," he observed. "Norah has turned us both down, hasn't she?"

When Monmouth had gone, Renalls refused to play as was his custom to the girl's accompaniment. "That young ass was right," he said. "You have turned us both down, Norah," he continued. "Why won't you marry me?"

"No use," she said. "I'm not for marrying just yet, and if ever I do, I don't think you'll be my type, Charlie."

He said nothing for a moment; then he looked at her hard. "I wouldn't be too sure of that," he observed. "I want you as I want nothing else on God's earth, and I have never failed yet in getting what I wanted."

There were people who termed him, for want of a better word, magnetic; and he had strange, compelling eyes that people did not always wish to meet. There was a certainty, too, in his manner which was disquieting, and she sometimes allowed herself to wonder if ever his strong personality would dominate her to the extent that he would be able to win her.

Tonight the old signet ring, which every day she determined to lay aside, seemed to give her strange comfort. She turned it round nervously. While she wore it and had not divorced its owner it promised her immunity — she was safe from him.

"What ring is that?" he demanded.

She looked at him steadily, her courage returning. "Perhaps it's an engagement ring," she said.

"I hope not, for the man's sake," he returned grimly. There was on his face a look that was pitiless. She was reminded of his statement that he fought his enemies with the relentless fury that his frontier forefathers battled with their foes, those renegade red men who were known as the Indians of the Plains.

"You haven't any right to say that," she cried, resentment in her voice.

"Why not?" he asked. "You say you are not going to marry, so I shall never have your husband to hate, shall I?"

"I wish you'd be sensible, Charlie," she said, slowly, "and not talk to me about marriage. I could never love you; and knowing this, you surely wouldn't want to marry me? It's unthinkable to my mind."

He laughed a little. "But not to mine. Do you suppose I don't think of it all the time? I never made any pretense to know what women are, or what they think, but I know what they do and that's enough. You'll marry me some

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day, Norah, and you'll be happy. That's a prophecy."

"But not one to be fulfilled," she cried.

He left the luxurious home with his customary manner and looked up at it from the sidewalk. It was a beautiful home, and Norah, as he knew, reveled in the luxury attainable only through wealth. It was one thing to refuse him when she was herself able to live in her own world, but what, he wondered, would she say on the day that saw the downfall of her hopes and he as her husband alone offered her the way of escape?

He walked to his hotel happily enough reveling in the thought that the woman he loved would inevitably have to accept him. He was possessed of the strength of the ardent, impatient man controlled and concealed from the world by indomitable force of will. Men called him a rock of strength when he was in reality a living volcano.

CHAPTER VII

CONCERNING TOMCOD

“Remember that you are an actor in a drama, of such a kind as the author pleases to make it. If short, of a short one; if long, of a long one. If it be his pleasure that you should act a poor man, a cripple, a governor, or a private person, see that you act it naturally. For this is your business, to act well with the character assigned you; to choose it is another’s.” — *Epictetus*.

ABOUT a week after his defeat as a book agent, an advertisement in the *Times* attracted Chester’s notice. It ran thus:

Discreet person of high moral character
wanted to act as companion to a gentleman
addicted to drink. Apply, etc.

By this time Chester had learned that modesty as to personal merit should not be used in answering help-wanted advertisements. He indicted a letter in which he set forth his reasons for considering himself suitable for the place and received two days later an answer. He was bidden call at Haven Avenue, Harlem, and there found an elderly woman by the name of Mrs. Congdon, who awaited him. Briefly she admitted that her son Alfred, aged four and forty, had inherited an

appetite for alcohol which divers companions had been unable to eradicate. Chester's appearance and physique pleased her and he was engaged without references (all her worst young men had come best equipped with them, she explained) at a salary of thirty dollars per month.

That night his baggage was transferred from his room and he entered upon his duties. Alfred Congdon, called invariably by all his friends Al, proved to be a rosy-faced, cheerful little man, whose one aim was to procure alcoholic stimulant. He declared without shame that but for his mother's view he would prefer to live and die in one glorious orgy of intoxication. Good rye, he averred, and his mother was fain to agree with him, developed musical possibilities which sobriety allowed to remain unsuspected. But for a fund of salacious anecdotes, Congdon was a pleasant enough companion and grew attached to his stronger minded cicerone. The Congdon home life, typical of the middle class, was happy if dull. The old lady was exceedingly fond of her son and thought she could not prove it better than by striving to please him with her cooking. When she was not overloading his stomach she was thinking of what she was pleased to term his poor

soul. Chester had been three days there and had seen no sign of Al's passion for liquor being offered an opportunity to develop. The man was allowed no money and it seemed he was happy enough, without. Mrs. Congdon, hearing this, shook her head. "You watch," she said, "and I will pray."

Al's one hobby was fishing. For hours on end he would sit at the river's side in Fort Washington Park hardby his house and fish for tomcod. There were other hopeful anglers to be seen all engaged on this rare pastime. Shad have well-nigh deserted the lordly Hudson, and only the tomcod braves the waters that once ran in fresh from the sea but are now polluted from oil tanks, sugar refineries, glucose and chemical factories and other marks of commercial prosperity. Possibly to some reflective, meditative minds a pleasure may be gained from the capture of these bony, ugly little fish, but it was a tame sport to a man like Chester, who had whipped Adirondack streams for trout, killed salmon in Scottish lochs, sturgeon in Norwegian fjords and fished Florida waters for tarpon. But Al was a sanguine angler, although possessed of mean skill in his hobby, and not a tomcod in the river but knew his bait and nibbled

at it with leisurely indifference. Al lived in the hope that some day he would catch a tomcod and take it home in triumph to his mother.

As Chester sat there many an idle morning staring at the Jersey shore opposite, he found himself becoming interested in its beauties. Far to the south the Edgewater ferry crawled backward and forward, and tall chimneys spoiled the little settlement that the New York of another generation knew as Pleasant Valley and earlier still as Tillietudlem.

To the north of it the rising road merged into the Palisades, now covered with luxuriant autumn foliage. He had often ascended the winding road in his automobile and remembered it principally as a weary way where speed must be controlled and high-powered cars trailed closely by a policeman on a little barking motor cycle. But with the aid of Al's telescope he perceived from Washington Point beauties which were new to him, and sweeping the ridge day after day, came to feel an interest in them. Directly opposite, on a fine promontory, stood the ruins of what seemed an old stone building; and below this and utterly without communication with the upland world, so far as he could see, was a little village under the Pali-

sades, hidden among tulip trees and sumach and old fruit trees. It was a little settlement whose white houses ran to the water's edge and had each a pier running out into the river. There was never a sign of life to be seen and only ascending spirals of smoke showed them to be inhabited dwellings.

"Al," he said one day, "have you ever been over there?" He pointed to the hidden village.

Al shook his head. He had the New Yorkers' tolerant scorn for Jersey. "This," said Al, intent on his line, "is good enough for me." A moment later, seeing that Chester was still gazing at the shore opposite, he elaborated, "Campers go over there in the summer."

"Shall we take a boat and explore?" Chester asked.

"Not for me," Al remarked firmly.

A day or so later his keeper perceived that Al had managed to obtain some forbidden stimulant and guessed that an elderly angler who sat close by had been generous. When this proved to be the case the man was warned and poor Al dragged from his favorite perch and taken out of temptation's zone. For two days Al sulked and tried to outwit the other, but there was never a ruse but Chester found it out, and he gradually grew

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more content and listened eagerly to a proposition which had the capture of fish for its end.

"They tell me," Chester began, "that tomcod are running fewer every year." Al assented. "That is so," he remarked regretfully.

"It's easy to see why," Chester told him. "There are too many fishermen this side of the water and too much traffic. The tomcod, I judge, is a wily beast and knows that as well as we do, and he spends his happy days on the Jersey shore. They probably lie over there by the shoal."

"I wonder if they do," Alfred mused. He looked at the unknown village with interest. It had been his ambition for years to carry home a string of tomcod victims to his prowess. Chester's manner greatly impressed him.

"I believe you're right," he said with conviction.

"We'll get a boat and row over," Chester affirmed, "and Heaven only knows what other fish we'll catch. I'll talk to your mother about it."

Mrs. Congdon reposed more confidence in him than in any previous companion engaged for her son. She gave consent, hoping that her boy's soul and body would benefit by the change. The following day saw the two men heading for the

other shore, Al a little anxious lest while he was absent some friend might make an unparalleled catch, and Chester openly elated at leaving the monotony of Point Washington behind.

Half an hour later they tied up the boat at one of the piers at the little village of Undercliff and received permission from the owner to fish therefrom. He was an old man who saw few strange faces nowadays, and welcomed the opportunity, so dear to such ancients, to talk of other days when the opposite shore was barer of buildings and only great estates marched to the water's edge. In his pleasure at being relieved from Al's sole company Chester's pouch was at the other man's service, and Al, whose nature was not acquisitive, settled himself down to fish. It was a day in his after life often referred to with reverence; for his enticing hook had no sooner settled down into Jersey ooze than a foolish eel, dissatisfied with his condition in life, seized on it and was hauled to the surface, the first of his kind that ever left the water tribute to Al's anglership. A new Al was born. The tomcod, bony, execrable fish, hard to find and worthless when found, was eliminated from Congdon's mind. "Let him," said Al, whose turgid thoughts might hardly find fitting expres-

sion in words, "let him roam the river uncared for. I have a nobler quarry." These thoughts passed through Al's mind with lightning rapidity, but what he translated for Chester's benefit was more colloquially expressed. "Me," said Al concisely, "for eels from now on." He decided to take eels of all sizes, colors and dispositions to his mother, that she might exercise her skill on their preparation for the table. Al was hoarse with emotion. He called Chester to him. "There's no room for passengers in our boat," he said darkly, nodding in the direction of his old haunt, where benighted men still fished for tomcod.

With easy mind Chester left him and started to explore. It was late autumn and the foliage was still beautiful in its many tones of red and gold, and he explored the narrow path until it wound gradually to the Englewood road at the Palisade's summit. Old and untouched by modern improvements, the white cottages of the hidden village, sheltered by enveloping trees from a too close observation, were utterly unlike anything in the neighborhood of New York. He sat down and puffed at his pipe with calm enjoyment. Sometimes the crackling branches overhead spoke of the passage of the thrifty squirrel garnering

stores against the coming winter. And the rustling of the undergrowth near him aroused his attention and he saw a red fox cross the path, chicken in mouth, and disappear into the denser brush that lay in the shadows of the tall cliffs. A few minutes later an angry woman, axe in hand, ran toward him, lamenting that reynard had slain six pullets. And just across the river lay bustling New York and the tall apartment houses of Harlem.

And one morning he came upon a little graveyard filled with the mouldering tombs of villagers who had been a century dead, men perhaps who remembered the Revolution and when New York lay far to the south and their village had boasted better fishing and more inhabitants. But now it was a forgotten hamlet whose place in the world of work was taken from it, and like the yellow leaves of autumn was passed into decay. Fifty years before, when the shad fishers had come there from the south and their boats were moored at the piers, it had been a place of fierce passions and lawless brawls. But kindly time had left it as peaceful and gentle as the old villagers themselves, an ideal place for quiet picnicking and woodland rambles.

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The ideal weather made these daily excursions very pleasant. Al was happy, and the motor boats which came close to the other shore never bothered him here. One day, when they were crossing and Al was at the oars, a fast motor launch nearly ran them down. Chester turned his glass on the craft and opened his mouth to shout a fitting rebuke, but thought better of it and encouraged Al to fresh efforts. Presently Chester saw that the offending launch had turned and was coming down the river again. He thereupon relieved Al of his labor and rowed across with even sweep. But as the launch neared him he caught a crab and lost an oar. Al's sense of humor seized on the occasion but was banished when he was informed that with only a single oar he had an excellent chance of drifting into the path of a big boat. At once he raised his voice, and the fast launch slowed down and came toward them. The only occupants were a slim golden-haired girl and two excited children.

Al experienced a greater respect when the children spoke to Chester as a long lost friend and even the lady bowed. Al was not to know that a premeditated accident had brought disaster on a finished waterman,

"I've just lost an oar," said the unblushing Chester. "I think if you'd be so kind you could get it for us; otherwise we may drift out to sea."

"Certainly," the girl answered graciously and then a look of hopelessness came over her face. "The engine has stopped," she ejaculated.

"It only wants cranking," Chester said.

"I'm afraid of that horrid wheel," she confessed. "Sometimes it goes off with such a jerk that it nearly breaks one's arm, and sometimes it backfires."

Chester knew of the contrary ways of marine motors and the danger often attending the cranking of high-powered ones. She had been running her engine light and had turned off too much of the mixture. He tied his little boat to the stern rail of the launch, and climbed aboard, motioning Al to stay where he was. The heavy fly-wheel went off with a whirr at half a turn. The oar was recovered without difficulty and Chester found himself possessed of a strong disinclination to leave the company of the woman he had married.

"How long does it take you to get to Yonkers from the Point?" he asked.

"I've never tried it," she said. She looked at him for a moment and then asked with a mo-

mentary hesitation, "Would you care to time it now?"

"Thank you," he returned gravely, taking out his watch.

She glanced astern at Al. "Your man will see that that painter doesn't foul the propeller as we turn, won't he?" she asked.

He allowed the phrase "your man" to pass and ordered the gratified inebriate to exercise due care. Then he fell to bitter reflection that, so far from Al being his man, the position was reversed. The mistake she made was easily explained. Chester was extremely well dressed, while the other exercised a lack of care which might well enough pass in a boatman. She noticed presently that there was a string of fish in the little boat.

"Have you been fishing?" she asked.

"He was," returned Chester. "I was ashore exploring a lost village." He waxed enthusiastic in its description.

"How quaint," she commented, "and to think I've never been there."

"Why don't you run the launch over there some day and prove my words true?" he inquired eagerly.

"Some day I may," she said. "Anything that offers rest appeals to me."

He wondered if her business worries still oppressed her. It was very strange to sit there knowing so much of her affairs and unable to say whether or not she was still his wife. He had not been to see Enderby for some time and although there had been no communication from Mr. Cosway up to that date, much might have occurred since then. He did not know what formalities it might be necessary for him to take. He only knew that it would be unnecessary for him to make an appearance. She was probably still Mrs. Richard Chester.

"Here is Yonkers," she said, breaking in upon his thoughts.

He looked up with a sigh. Ten years ago, when he had come of age, much of his income was derived from land in the prosperous riverside town. He remembered mortgaging two acres of land behind the ugly sugar refinery to finance some wildcat scheme that caught his youthful fancy.

It should, had he not played the fool, have become his wife's and passed to the children inheriting his ancient name. And, he wondered, would he ever meet a woman who embodied in so

charming a personality such courage and strength as this girl standing at the wheel of her fast boat almost at his side. He cursed himself for a coward that he had not strength enough to avoid temptation. It had been a deliberate running into temptation, he told himself. He was scathing when this mood settled on him. With what high hopes had he not left this girl on that eventful night, and to what had his efforts brought him? To be a keeper to smug bourgeois Al, riding contentedly astern! It was a mood of desolation and depreciation which allowed him to call no witnesses for the defence. In reality his life had many things which proved him of high courage and honor, but these were lost sight of in the contemplation of the disasters to which carelessness had brought him. He looked at the two pretty children and thought that here was something cut out of his life which might have helped him.

As she passed Undercliff, the girl ran in under the Jersey shore. "I think I shall take your advice and explore," she exclaimed. "Shall we?" she asked of the children.

"Are there bears there?" Cyril demanded.

"I saw a fox there only this morning," said Chester.

"I hope you aren't exaggerating," the girl said.

"Truth tempered with enthusiasm," he returned. "That only."

"Then I shall come," she answered. "I suppose my mechanician will try to dissuade me — he always does — but if it's fine I shall come."

"Why bring an unconvinced mechanician?" he demanded.

"Cranking," she said briefly. "The engine gets too hot if I run her all the time I shall be ashore."

"It so happens," he said eagerly, "that I shall be there tomorrow, and I shall revel in cranking, if I may."

"I really couldn't think of bothering you," she answered a little stiffly. She suddenly recollected that she knew absolutely nothing of this rather assured stranger. His face fell and she grew more gracious. She remembered that he had been very kind to 'Ginia.

"If I come I may be glad of your aid."

"Thank you," he said brightly. "I'm sure Cyril will enjoy it." He stepped from the launch and cast off in a happier frame of mind. She had just the amount of dignity and just the amount of vivacity that he admired in a woman. Al gazed after her in evident admiration.

"Who's your little lady friend?" asked Al with a knowing wink. "Didn't introduce her because you was afraid I'd cut you out, I suppose?"

"Al," Chester warned him gravely, "when you speak of that lady, let me hear more respect in your voice."

"And if not?" Al retorted with a species of weak defiance.

"If not," Chester returned, "I shall drop you overboard and see you sink to tomcod land without a qualm."

"I believe you'd do it," Al declared. He was a little afraid of his keeper.

The next day Al, industriously angling for reluctant eels, waxed conversationally inclined and indulged his fancy in dreams of what he would do with Rockefeller's wealth. But he found no satisfaction in describing his doings under those happy circumstances to a man who was not listening. He wondered why his companion gazed so steadfastly to the southeast. The fast motor boat answered him and he beheld Chester row out to it and bring the three passengers ashore in the small boat, tying the power launch to a mooring.

Norah gave Al a pleasant smile as she passed but Cyril caught sight of an eel who was an unconscionable time a-dying. Its struggles fascinated him. "May I stay and fish?" he pleaded.

"Sure you can, if the lady don't mind," returned the gratified Al.

"It will be quite safe," Chester assured her, and Cyril glanced at him with gratitude. He had often longed to dangle his legs over deep water or water at least deep enough to drown him, and here was an opportunity! When his aunt and the others had disappeared, he opened rapid-fire questions on his companion; and Al, for the one time in his career, found a listener who credited him with a knowledge piscatorial and listened with respect when he talked of the capture of eels and the wiles of the tomcod.

CHAPTER VIII

CAPTAIN OF HIS SOUL

"At what do you gaze?" asked the Sage. "For clouds with silver linings," said the young man. "Well, it is to aim high," the Sage replied, "but do you not see that the earth on which you stand has grains of gold?"

NORAH was simply dressed and Chester thought he had rarely seen a girl look more charming and care-free. She was tanned by the sun into that golden, unfreckled brown so rarely seen in blondes, and on her small brown hand was his signet ring. When she caught him gazing at it she unobtrusively drew her hand away. What interpretation might he put on such an action, he pondered.

When, an hour later, they sat by the ruins of an old stone-crusher, now mercifully crumbling into desuetude after vandal effort to spoil the towering cliffs behind it, she admitted that he made a very agreeable companion. 'Ginia, immersed in the creation of a drama which she was determined to

enact later with her brother, took little interest in the conversation of the others.

"It's rather curious," reflected Norah, "that I should be sitting in this new country talking to a stranger, isn't it?"

"I'm not a stranger," he protested, "and beside, things are always ordained."

She looked at him apprehensively. Remarks like these usually foreshadowed attempts at flirtation. She was not sure that it was wise of her to forsake the conventions as she had done in this instance.

"Now follows the remark that we met in a previous existence," she said.

"I haven't said that for years," he laughed. "I think I left off in my teens."

"I wonder what you were like then," she said. "I suppose you were in your teens once."

His face darkened. "I was a creature of silly enthusiasms and blissful beliefs that came to nothing."

"There are no silly enthusiasms before one is twenty," she answered gently. "There's always something rather beautiful about our beliefs then."

"I'm afraid my beliefs weren't very practical,"

he said. "I—well, I wasted my opportunities in the approved fashion."

"You talk as though you'd suffered complete shipwreck," she remarked.

"I have," he returned.

She looked at him sharply. "Really and truly?"

"Yes," he answered, "really and truly."

"Did you strike a rock?"

"I drifted on to it instead," he returned. "It robs me of my chance to complain of bad luck. There's always some excuse for the mariner who takes his vessel along cheerily and then strikes a snag, but none for the man who drifts."

"Are we being serious?" she demanded. "I hadn't the smallest idea that we were going to take each other seriously."

"I spoke the truth," he answered, "but I should hardly count it as serious. I am not claiming a tragical setting for my story. Farce, I imagine, is more fitting."

"If you are speaking the truth," she replied gravely, "there seems little enough farce in it as I understand the word."

He shrugged his shoulders. "Sometimes I think that our struggles are just to give the Olym-

pians something to laugh at. I am sure any self-respecting god on Olympus must have laughed at mine."

"I don't think I like such flippancy," she returned. "There's a false note in it. There can be nothing so tragically awful as the failure of a man who is not a fool, or a woman either, for that matter."

"You haven't failed," he said.

"I'm rather afraid sometimes," she admitted. "When I am *triste* I feel like a small boat flying from pirates who will eventually overtake her and sink her." She thought with some trepidation of Renalls' failure to believe in her Brazilian venture and wondered whether her own belief in it was born merely of impatience of opposition.

She turned to her companion with a smile. "This is a singularly bright and entertaining conversation, isn't it? I think we have both been saying rather silly things." She looked at him critically and found no trace of failure in his appearance or dress. "I won't believe that you have failed, and I won't believe that I shall fail."

He pointed to the river before him; there was

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Al laboriously rowing upstream at the dictates of his new friend.

"All that's left of my vessel," he said.

"At any rate you are still the captain of it," she told him. He looked at unskilful Al sourly. There was his captain, did she but know it. It was a tragical farce after all.

When he looked at her again he saw that she was sitting, her hands clasped around her knees, staring into the distance and seeing nothing. So frail and small she seemed to him that he was conscious of a rush of tenderness for her. Why had she been foolish enough to put to sea, he wondered, and risk the shoal waters. Presently her black mood vanished and she pointed to a motor boat rushing by on the other shore.

"The fastest in the world," she cried. "I should love to go aboard her."

"She's very uncomfortable," he assured her. "And what with spray and vibration, about the most miserable craft for a lady I could conceive of."

"You've been aboard?" she demanded.

"Often," he said, carelessly forgetting that here was a page of his former life.

"Mr. Kerrison belongs to the Knickerbocker Club, doesn't he?"

"Yes," Chester said, still intent on watching the launch race by. The girl looked at him with interest. This established his social status without question. She ventured the inquiry, "Did you too?"

"Yes," he said and then stopped short. "Before the wreck." He was annoyed at being caught. It was ludicrous to think of Al's companion as a member of New York's exclusive clubs. "Of course that's all in the long ago," he explained.

Many men had complained that she took no interest in their affairs; and such a charge was as a rule just, because she rarely felt sufficient curiosity to warrant it, but there was something about this man, of whose name even she was ignorant, which excited an uncommon degree of interest. Perhaps he had indeed suffered a shipwreck. In an age when fashion marks with so arbitrary a hand the habitat of the socially elect, it was more than strange to meet a man like this accompanied by a shabby boatman and making holiday on the Hudson. And if he had suffered shipwreck, why was he still pursuing the drifting policy? He grew conscious of her meditations concerning him.

"I'm afraid I'm not very satisfactory," he apologized.

"I think there exists in most women," she said gently, "a mania for wanting to set things right and generally to understudy Providence. I don't think we ever believe that any hopes are forlorn or any shipwreck complete. I don't believe it of you."

"You are very good," he said gratefully. "I think women are too kind in their thoughts to failures, but when ever did a shipwrecked mariner find the future rosy?"

"You didn't drown," she returned, "and you are strong and young, and," she pointed to New York, "look what lies before you! This is not a desert island."

"You mean," he said slowly, "why don't I go and work instead of talking?"

"It's the only way to get even with fate," she cried.

"Would you believe I am working at the present moment?" he demanded.

"How can you be?" she exclaimed.

He pointed to Al, rowing back with the tide to his fishing pier. "I am that man's attendant," he said. "I look after the poor little beast be-

cause he's weaker than I am, and I get thirty dollars a month and my board for doing it. I'm not in the least proud of it, but at least you will see that I have been telling you the truth."

It was lamentable, she thought, nay, it was ludicrous that such a man should come to such a task. She did not know of the weary waiting in outer offices and the fruitless quests for work he had undertaken before coming to the Congdons' home. She did not know how hard New York can be to those without economic value, nor of the grim shadow of Blackwell's Island which looms before the destitute. She cast about her instantly for something which might better become him. Renalls, she supposed, would have some opening, but then dismissed the thought when she remembered the relation in which Renalls stood to her. He would hate this good-looking assured man more than he did Monmouth. It occurred to her that some opening might easily be found in Brazil, where he could forget his failure and start anew. But she judged from his look that he might not care to feel indebted to her expressed pity and interest. It would be better to wait until Mendoza came over, as he was to do early in the new year.

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"I have a friend who has large mining interests in South America," she said. "If you care to give me your address I will write to him about you." For a moment he was confused. He could be neither Richard Chester nor Chester Dick. He fell back upon the middle name of Vincent. "My address," he said, writing it down, "is R. Vincent, care of W. Biggs, Number One Wall St." He looked at her gratefully. "It's most awfully kind of you to do this."

"Not in the least," she assured him, taking the paper.

She called her little niece to her and rose to her feet. On her way to the launch she said little, and Richard unjustly supposed that since she now knew his exact relationship to Alfred Congdon she would want no further communication with him. He had not the heart to speak of further exploration and took his leave of her in the belief that the launch was bearing her out of his sight forever.

Al watched the boat with some pride. He had a personal interest in it and was amazingly taken with the ingenuous Cyril.

"That's a great kid," he observed presently; "he's coming tomorrow with his own tackle, and

"I'm going to," Al's voice took on a new note of pride, "I'm going to teach him how to catch eels."

"They'll never come here again," Chester observed with quiet certainty.

Al looked at him inquiringly. "Have you two had a spat?"

"Tomorrow," returned Chester, "we shall go over to the Bronx and study animal life in the Zoo." He abandoned himself to gloomy thoughts. Fading from sight was the only girl, since the day he had seen Marion Griffiths enter the enclosed life, who aroused the slightest interest in him. He was interrupted by his companion's expostulating voice.

"But I promised him," he urged. "He said his mother was just daffy for him to lead the healthy life, and he's going to tell her all about me. He's going to bring his tackle and food out here tomorrow and we're going to spend the whole day fishing. I guess we'll cut out that monkey-house business till some other day."

"He won't come," snapped Chester impatiently. "His aunt as good as told me so. The Bronx Park for us tomorrow."

Al was not possessed of a strong will; since

birth he had been dominated and rarely evinced powers of resistance. "I don't like going back on my word," he objected.

Chester laughed gently at him. "It's all right," he said. "Trust me when I say that his mother won't let him come."

For the first time since Chester had known him Al was stubborn at breakfast on the following morning, and carried his point. Al brought unbelievable art to his aid.

"Me and him," he said, indicating Chester with his fork, "was going into the Bronx Park today, but somehow I don't feel like it. The houses are hot and stuffy, and fresh air is what's good for me."

"There's no necessity to enter the houses at all," Chester told him. "There are plenty of attractions outside."

"Still I don't like the idea of all these animals about," replied the evasive Al; "you can catch all sorts of animal diseases nowadays," he assured his mother.

"Don't go," the worthy lady said promptly.

"I won't," he returned instantly. "I'll go fishing again. I declare that Jersey air makes me feel fine as silk."

Chester took his defeat smiling. "Al," he said, "you have a cunning I didn't credit you with."

Mrs. Congdon had gone from the room to replenish the plate of buckwheat cakes. Al leaned over the table and spoke seriously. "I don't hold with breaking my word to kids," he averred. "I told him I was coming."

"As you will," Chester said with assumed indifference; but as the time drew near for them to set out he caught some of Al's impatience. His heart beat quicker at the thought that she might come after all. He told himself that he would be content to sit quietly by the angler's side and not expect her to go exploring. It was a humble frame of mind for a Chester! There were two weary hours of waiting at Undercliff before Al, glass to eye, espied the launch. "I knew that kid would come," he said. His glass was quickly snatched from him. Chester's pilot was aboard.

"Al," he said, handing him the telescope, "you are a great reader of character and this is more interesting and uplifting than any Zoo in any country."

Only Norah and the boy were in the boat. Virginia, it was explained, had gone to a children's morning concert at the Waldorf-Astoria. Cyril's

tackle roused great enthusiasm in the teacher of angling and he was eager to get to work. Cyril shared his zeal and presently turned to Chester and his aunt. "Al says," he declared politely, "that talking frightens the fish."

The girl looked at her companion with a smile.

"That's a sentence of banishment, I suppose. Cyril demands absolute quiet. I had no idea fishes were so sensitive. Exploring seems to be indicated."

He followed her past the cottage and up the wooden steps into the lane. "I didn't think you'd come," he said, and she noticed the half concealed gladness in his tone.

"Why not?" she demanded.

"I thought when you found that I was only —"

She stopped with a gesture, imperiously. "Don't be stupid," she cried. "It was a surprise, but it's a proof I was right when I said yours wasn't a shipwreck. Anyway," she added after a pause, "I have no right to judge or offer advice."

"You're worried?" he asked sympathetically.

"I'm not complaining," she retorted.

"You're not one of that sort," he answered deliberately.

"Why not?" she asked. "What do you know of me? To you I am absolutely an unknown quantity, without credentials and without confidences. You can't know anything of me because I'm no longer as frank as I was." She sighed. "I'm sorry sometimes that I'm not. It's much nicer to believe everyone is kind and good and above all that things are coming out all right."

"So they are," he affirmed stoutly.

She looked at him reproachfully. "Oh, my shipwrecked mariner," she cried, "what a recantation, what a heresy! Never was a gloomier mortal yesterday than you. Whence this conversion?"

"I was gloomy about myself, not about you," he explained. "I have little belief in myself, but heaps of it in you. I have tried and I have failed. Can you look back on your life and see some big opportunity which you avoided, or some duty which you shirked?"

"You are talking rather like a woman writer in a magazine," she said. "I can see you in your present mood answering questions under the *nom de plume* of Aunt Mary or something equally comforting."

He laughed in spite of himself. "You haven't

answered Aunt Mary's question," he reminded her. "Have you ever failed in something big?"

"Life isn't made up of big things," she answered. "It's full of small unrelated episodes, and is altogether a difficult course to steer."

They were sitting on the grassy bank within a few yards of the water, and he looked at her keenly to discover whether or not she was in a serious mood. Leaning partly forward, with one hand holding her chin, the exquisite outline of her profile made a picture that was not soon forgotten. It must be a favorite pose with her, he judged, since the miniaturist whose work he had stolen had caught her just at such an angle. It was a bitter thought that he had come to know her at a time when his fortune was gone and under conditions which precluded the seeking of a closer acquaintance. He found himself wondering what might have happened had this meeting taken place two or three years sooner. He had given much consideration to his promise made to her on the night destiny had sent him to her dwelling. It was, in effect, an oath not to recognize her if chance brought them together again, and to abrogate all claims of any kind. But, he argued, it was surely no breach of this faith to walk

with her and talk to her when she was all unconscious of his identity.

It was cold comfort to assure himself that this was probably their last meeting. Such prospects as he had, made a continuance of their friendship out of the question. She was rich and he was poor; and there is no convention more clearly defined among most honorable men than the refusal to marry for money. Chester was one who held such ideas. But he was sufficiently broad-minded to view certain international marriages without unreasoning dislike. There was a cousin of his — but for his brother his only living relation — who had made such a match and was happy. Her husband had repaired ancestral halls with New York money, but Chester had always held the transaction an equitable one. It was an old title whose holders had held it honorably since the days of Cœur de Lion's first crusade. And his cousin's boy, playing in the galleries of his father's castle, looked up at soldiers, statesmen and courtiers who were his ancestors too, and felt stirring in him a proud childish pleasure all the stronger for the admixture of the virile blood of the dominant people of the future.

He was roused from his musing by his compan-

ion's voice. "I don't like to think that you take such a gloomy view of things. This is a young man's age and you needn't be always looking after that curious little man. New York abounds in opportunities."

"Under what *nom de plume* do you write?" he asked with a smile.

"I hadn't the slightest intention of being serious till you started it," she explained. "Life is a hard business, no matter what platitudes one reads, because one can never be certain that one isn't blundering until it may be too late. The temptations of life, for instance, are not very readily seen and the great accidents and tragedies of life are not so marked from ordinary everyday happenings as to be warnings to us."

She looked up at him. "Have you ever fished for trout, Mr. Vincent?"

"Yes," he answered in surprise.

"The fly that lands your trout gasping on the bank deceives him because it is so exactly like the hundreds of other flies he had for breakfast all his life long. I sometimes think we are all like the poor trout that don't know the difference."

"This isn't very cheerful," he protested.

"I blame you," she retorted. "The fact is,

I always try to believe that we get some credit for good intentions even if we blunder. It wouldn't be just to blame us for not knowing sometimes which was the real fly and which the artificial one."

He looked at her gravely; evidently something specific was in her mind. He quoted the Persian:

"Oh, Thou who didst with Pitfall and with Gin,
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestination round
Enmesh me and impute my Fall to Sin?"

The girl looked at him smiling. "I love Omar for that quatrain," she cried. "I often picture him under the bough with the cup of wine by his side and red and yellow roses all about him and a great kindness in his heart. Of all the verses he wrote, he wanted most to know the answer to that."

"Why should you be serious?" Chester demanded after a pause. "Haven't you everything?"

She did not answer him immediately. She had health, youth, beauty and a fortune. But her fortune was embarked in a perilous undertaking and she felt very deeply the need of some intimate friend in whom she could confide. She had never realized until his death what reliance had been placed in Mr. Cosway. She was handicapped in

her conduct of the Brazilian venture by her lack of knowledge of the world of business. With a woman's dislike to letting things get out of her grasp she was fretting over details and neglecting more important matters. And she was conscious now and then that Renalls was watching her and noting her failures.

"Why should you be serious?" Chester demanded again.

"I'm not," she cried, "and I can prove it. I see on the sand, or shingle, or whatever the mud on a river bank is called, innumerable bottles. If you put them on the piles and give me two shots to your one, I will beat you."

Chester fell into her spirit with alacrity and for twenty minutes they demolished the bottles that campers had left behind or the river given up. She owned herself vanquished, and presently fell to throwing pieces of wood into the outgoing tide and speculating upon their adventures.

"If I were a Hans Christian Andersen," she said, "I would write of the singular things which might happen to them. Some may get to Europe even." She looked at him curiously. "By the way," she cried, "weren't you bound for the open sea when I met you first in the boat?"

"If you hadn't rescued us we might have drifted out to sea," he returned.

"You might have been drowned," she said.

"There would have been murder on my soul if we had," he told her.

"How?" she demanded.

"That crab I caught," he explained, "and the oar I lost were premeditated acts." He looked at her a little anxiously. He was not sure what had actuated him to confess this. He did not know what he would say if she asked him the reason for this strange act.

"You had no right to do so," she said rather coldly. "You, possibly, can swim, but the other person might have been drowned."

"Was it very sinful?" he asked.

"It was unnecessary," she returned, still stiffly, "and means that in future I shall turn a deaf ear to people pretending to be in peril."

And indeed his confession did not please her. There had been a certain pleasure in the thought that their acquaintance might ripen into friendship. She wanted not lovers, but friends, and had conceived of relations where the eternal law of polarity might be forgotten in the perfect confidence born of friendship. Chester was a man

whom she liked instinctively and she was displeased to find it was design and not accident which had brought him the second time to her. She had suffered disappointment before when men had sought to ask her for a deeper regard. Renalls began in this way, and her cousin Ronald was another. In his case an ardent desire to teach her golf led to the friend's rôle being dropped for that of the adorer.

It was true this stranger had said nothing to which she could take exception, but these unconventional meetings, for which he had begged, in so many words, might easily lead to the same complications. She turned the Chester ring round and round her finger. She had come to look upon it almost as a kind of protection, a barrier between her and the strong, silent menace of Charles Renalls. She shot a swift glance at the man by her side and found him wearing the character of depression. She admitted that he had never been guilty of the overconfidence which some men might assume who had been favored by her companionship under the circumstances. She had noticed in him only a certain quiet courage which she had thought of as thoroughbred. But when she spoke, it was still severely.

“That little man might have been drowned.”

“Have you considered his build?” Chester enquired gravely. “Do you think a man of five feet three inches, weighing two hundred and ten pounds, could sink in salt water?”

“I think you should be serious,” she reproved him.

“I am,” he retorted. “In my mind’s eye I can see him floating out to marine adventure.”

“You ought at least to apologize to him,” she said.

“You don’t mean that,” he returned. “You couldn’t if you thought about it for a moment. What should I say to him, to that poor vulgar little brute, whose mind never rises above capturing eels? Do you think I could talk to him about you or explain that an overpowering desire to see you again made me resort to that trick?”

There was noticeable for the first time a vibrant ring of passion in his voice; but it did not frighten her as a similar note in Renalls might have done, or weary her as Monmouth’s offered affection would certainly do. It produced instead a certain diffidence which she had not thought to find in her nature. And after all he had transgressed no law and been guilty of no offense. She turned

away with a carelessness that he did not know was assumed. "Why shouldn't you tell him?" she asked.

"I don't think one cares to tell about what are rather precious memories," he answered steadily. "Most women of your world would not speak to a man occupied as I am now. You have treated me as though I were still the man I once was, and you can never know what a help that is. I didn't mean at first that you should know what I was to Congdon. I was ashamed of him, but somehow I became more ashamed of feeling this shame. I sha'n't be with him long — there are better things ahead, I hope — but because I met you here, it will always be a pleasant remembrance, but you mustn't think I am going to share it with anyone else."

He rose to his feet and offered her a helping hand. "I expect you will be wanting to know how many eels have fallen to Cyril's skill."

There was in his manner a touch of finality. It was as though he had accepted her rebuke as merited and was desirous to atone by leaving her. What he had said only stirred her to a deeper interest.

"I'm not in the least anxious to know," she

declared idly, ignoring his hand. "What are you going to do?" she demanded when she saw him standing uncertainly before her.

"I thought of going back," he replied lamely. "I had an idea you wanted to go."

"Absolutely unwarrantable of you," she said.

He looked at her, still in doubt. Was this a dismissal? Did she prefer to walk back alone? "Shall I go?" he asked suddenly.

"If you care to leave me alone here, unprotected against whatever may lurk in the woods, by all means go," she answered. "Personally I'm very comfortable in this autumn sunshine."

He resumed his seat by her side. Women were incomprehensible, he assured himself dismally. She had been angry, it seemed, and now when he tried to repair the error her manner still suggested that he was in the wrong.

"You may run away if you have anything better to do," she continued. "I'm not in the least afraid of being left alone. I daresay you're quite wrong about there being copperheads here."

"I don't want to go," he said vehemently.

"I'm glad you've thought better of it," she returned. "I should have been annoyed to find a being who was interesting suddenly turn tail."

"Were you interested?" he asked.

"You seem like something out of real life. I've never met anyone who had had to struggle before. You have struggled, haven't you?" she demanded.

"Struggle is too dignified a name," he said. "I have made spasmodic attempts to alter my condition. My last was to sell books to people who didn't want them."

She listened intently to his description of his efforts. "What detestable people!" she cried. "I should have bought a set if you had come to our house."

"No well trained butler would allow me to enter," he laughed. He was surprised that the whole humiliating experience had lost its sting. He had thought of it only yesterday with a shudder.

"Was that your first position?" she asked.

"They are called jobs," he reminded her smiling. "No; I had a previous job. I was entrusted with a coffee route in Brooklyn. My duties were to leave packages of coffee and tea and a new and superior brand of salad dressing on my customers."

"Why did you give it up?" she demanded.

"Evil fortune pursued me," he laughed. "While I was expatiating with unusual eloquence on my coffee, explaining why it was superior in aroma, and cheaper to use than any other coffee, some miscreant stole my hog-maned cob and shiny van, and from that day to this it has never been heard of. I often wonder," he continued reflectively, "what they did with five hundred bottles of salad dressing."

"Actually stole it while you were near?" she exclaimed.

"Such evil is man capable of," he assured her. "I was getting quite attached to that hog-maned cob," he added. "She was about fourteen-three, and a chestnut with fine riding shoulders. She had a strained tendon, but I believe I could have cured that."

"What on earth did you do?" Norah demanded.

"Walked back to my headquarters in Jersey City," he told her. "It was fearfully hot and I hadn't any money to ride. The owner was an excitable native of Eastern Prussia, voluble beyond belief, and his eyes filled with tears to follow that salad dressing in its flight. He had made me deposit one hundred dollars as a surety, and that he

seized. I've learned since that it was illegal, but I felt properly punished and went forth from his presence much abashed. Naturally that made a revision of my expenditure necessary. Books followed, and now Al demands my care."

"You must have heaps of friends," she hazarded. "Won't they help you?"

"I haven't asked them," he returned. "I'm not proud of being what I am, and I'd rather cherish kind memories of the men I used to know than listen to them all saying solemnly, 'I prophesied it all long ago.'"

"But you've helped other men, I expect," she said.

"It's often easier to do that than refuse," he commented. "In those days, if a man came to me for advice, I knew he only wanted to be assured that what he had done was right." He shrugged his shoulders. "It's different now. They'd begin to tell me things for my own good, and when a man does that he's no longer your friend."

"You are very bitter," she said quietly.

"I hope not," he retorted. "I know my world; that's all."

"I have great faith in that mining man I spoke of," she said presently.

"It's very good of you to trouble about me," he said gratefully. "I've had a little experience in mining."

"Why didn't you say so yesterday?" she demanded. "What was it?"

"I took an assaying and surveying course," he said. "I really worked hard at it, and bought a theodolite and level and divided every public and private space I could see into triangles. None of my friends would believe it, but I assure you it's true."

"Why not try for something in that line?" she suggested.

"I have," he said, "but they all say I've had no experience. I've never held a job at it, you see. I took it up then because I had a sort of interest in a mine." He did not tell her that he had bought it outright from the sale of some Yonkers land opposite.

"Is the assay of gold difficult?" she asked.

"One of the easiest metals," he assured her. "Not a quarter as bad as copper."

"My mining friend is interested in gold," she said with a sigh of relief, "and I don't see a bit

why you shouldn't do well with him. He might want you to go to Brazil, though. Would you mind?"

"I'd revel in it," he declared enthusiastically. "You've put new life into me."

CHAPTER IX

BLUDGEONINGS OF CHANCE

"A great city is the school for studying life." — *Johnson*.

THEY found Cyril lying asleep in the sun his head resting on Al's coat. The child had wearied of his fishing. When he was awakened he declared that he had promised Al to come the next day.

"I'm afraid you can't," she said gently. "Have you forgotten that we are all going to Lakewood tomorrow for a week?"

"When I come back?" he pleaded.

"We shall always be here," said Al eagerly.

Chester heard her answer with a thrill of pleasure. It would be a dreary week alone with Al, but it would pass at last. He watched the launch disappear in a frame of mind happier than had been his for many months. Al presently interrupted his meditations.

"It must be great to have a kid like that," he said. "I'd be a good father if I had one. When he was lying by me with his head on my coat I

felt like as I'd missed something." He spat into the stream and muttered an oath. Chester looked at him astonished; this was a new side to the man.

"I was engaged once," he continued, "but she ran off with somebody else. I might have been a good man now if she'd have stuck to me and I'd had some kids. I took to the drink after that. It'll be my finish," he concluded dully.

"Why should it?" Chester asked gently. "Why couldn't you cut it out altogether? You've had nothing for five days now and you're looking like a new man."

"You don't know what it is," Al said firmly. "I don't like it same as most men who take three or four goes of whiskey a day. When I want it I must have it, and I generally get it." He looked at his companion genially. "I like you first rate," he observed, "better than all the others bunched together, but if you want to stay on with us you've got to watch me mighty close. The old woman won't stand for you if I get it right under your nose. And that," said Al sadly, "is what I'm liable to do. That's why all the rest got fired."

"'Forewarned is forearmed,'" Chester quoted.

"Not on your life," Al assured him. "They all got warned."

The next morning Al complained of a cold and some fever. "I knew I'd get it," he explained to Chester, "when I put my coat round the little fellow yesterday, but don't you tell the old lady or she'll put the kibosh on our going over there." By evening he had developed a thoroughly bad cold and asked boldly for a large dose of quinine dissolved in hot whiskey and water. This was a combination in which Mrs. Congdon had great faith and used it upon herself, her maid servant or the stranger that was within her gates; but whether to allow her son to taste of the enticing spirit was a nice point. She watched his cold increasing in severity — she would have none of physicians — feeling that she had in the whiskey and quinine a certain remedy. She was always guided in her daily conduct by seeking haphazard a verse from the Scriptures, and by this facile method thought she received direct counsel from above. A verse had seemed appropriate when she was not certain whether to engage Chester or another man. Today Al watched with considerable anxiety. Slowly she read out a verse as though uncertain how to apply it, "Then shall the lambs feed after their manner." Al instantly became cheerful and the colored girl went out for a bottle

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of the best rye, and the lamb smiled amiably. He had dreamed the night before that he would never taste spirits again. He shuddered becomingly at the bitter taste and was tucked into bed.

At one o'clock Chester, who slept in the same large room, was awakened by the patient, who could not go from it until the bed on which the younger man slept was pulled from athwart the door. Al explained that he was deadly cold and wanted his mother's hot-water bottle filled. As Chester could not fetch it he allowed Al to go, listening suspiciously the while. He heard the sick man's heavy steps descend to the kitchen, heard him light the gas and boil the kettle. Then he listened as he ascended, entered the room, and crept into bed with the hot-water bottle at his feet. Chester took the precaution to turn on the light and go through the other's dressing-gown pockets. Nothing was to be found. Al merely shook his head sadly at this lack of faith and began sneezing violently.

In the morning he slept stertorously and his mother, bending over him, started back in alarm: the lamb puffed whiskey into her face. Much agitated, she commenced to upbraid Chester. In defense he pointed out that the bottle was safely

stowed away in her room. Examination proved that the bottle was unmoved, containing approximately the same amount as had been left the previous night. Chester removed the cork and smelt the contents. Al had filled it up with water and the black bottle had concealed his aim. It was impossible that he could have drunk the spirit, since he was of those who can take but little. He was awakened and subjected to examination, but he persisted in smiling happily and refusing to answer. He also declined to arise, insisting that his slumbers had been too rudely broken. When taxed with concealing the whiskey, he professed no repentance and gibed at his mother's concern for his poor soul. He was permitted to sleep on, and Mrs. Congdon's manner to Chester became markedly severe. At luncheon, sounds of revelry arose from the bedroom overhead and the two gazed at one another in horror. Al bursting into song was Al at the height of alcoholic content. A curious spectacle met their gaze as they threw open the door. Flushed and happy, he was emptying the contents of the rubber warming bottle; he had filled it with whiskey the night before.

Mrs. Congdon felt no need to search the Scriptures in order to give Chester his marching orders;

she declined to believe that the thing was not accomplished with his connivance, and pursued him to the door with slighting remarks as to his future prospects. Thus it was that Chester, with some twenty dollars in his pocket, found his way back to his little room in East Sixty-ninth Street, which was fortunately disengaged.

For some things he did not regret the change. His talks with Norah had stirred him to fresh ambition and he knew that his dependent position with the Congdons could lead to nothing. He made his way to Enderby's office on the following morning and interviewed the office manager, who informed him that no communications of any sort had come for Mr. Chester Dick. "It's possible," said Chester, "that some may come for Mr. R. Vincent. If so, please hold them."

Biggs made the necessary memorandum. "Want to see the boss?" he inquired. The other hesitated a moment. "Thanks, no," he said, "I won't take up his time." He still cherished an affection for the lawyer, but he doubted if it would be proof against the reception he feared he would now encounter from him. Biggs reported the interview to his employer, who manifested what Biggs thought unnecessary temper. "You might

have known I wanted to see him," he cried pettishly. "Next time, tell me without saying anything to him."

"He doesn't forget being kept waiting forty minutes," observed the sapient Biggs. "That sort never likes to wait."

Enderby waved him impatiently aside. That sort, as he well knew, did not like to be kept waiting.

Richard went from Enderby's to a large employment agency which had frequently, in reply to advertisements, sent him its circulars. He was required to expend the sum of five dollars to become eligible for entry on the books. The eminently suave young man who interviewed him explained that the agency made absolutely nothing on this fee and demonstrated that the name of each client was borne in the books at an annual cost of six dollars and eighteen cents. Chester joyfully filled in an application blank, and heard that a lack of experience would militate against his chance of success. With the fee paid the suave young man lost interest and permitted himself to yawn. But Chester, who was never so determined to get on, walked out head up and jaunty of carriage. He called on other agencies, some of

which asked for fees and some of which did not. He filled more blanks attesting his unfitness, and was highly pleased with his new found hustle when he came across Peck, once of Cornell. Peck greeted him cheerily. "What luck?" he cried.

"Nothing to boast of yet," Chester told him. "What of yours?"

"I belong to another century," said Peck wearily. He had walked many miles that day to save carfares and he had not breakfasted well. "An age of meditation would suit me. I was up at six to answer an early job; they want a watchman at the New Century Club, but they rejected me because they didn't like my looks. How did you make out with those books?"

"I didn't," said Chester. "What about you?"

"The same story," said Peck. "They were reprints anyhow, those books, and the plates were old, and I suppose we aren't salesmen."

"What are you after now?" Chester demanded.

"A job," said Peck of Cornell. "Winter's coming on and it's up to me to get something before the merry sleigh-bells jangle."

"Come and have lunch," Chester exclaimed abruptly. He saw the other's pallor and made a guess at its cause.

Peck looked at him gratefully. "Can you afford it?" he demanded.

"Easily," cried Chester, rich in the possession of twenty dollars. "Where shall we go?"

"Chinatown," said Peck. "Mushroom chop suey a quarter, rice five cents, a plate of pork ten cents, and tea ad libitum for nothing. Forty cents for the most satisfying meal in Christendom. You can walk it in ten minutes from here."

The two men remained in the Mott Street restaurant for two hours and Chester learned much wisdom concerning New York and his chances therein. "Economically," cried Peck, consuming cup after cup of tea, "we cumber the ground. If I could pound a typewriter I might be worth twelve a week; but nobody will trust one to me. If I could lay bricks I'd own a house and lot in a year; if I could wrestle successfully with double entry I should have hope, but as it is, I'm like Little Mary in the hymn, 'I am always in the way.' What can you do?"

Peck was not impressed by Chester's abilities. "The mining offers the best chance," he observed, "if you can interest someone in you. But for that we're just about the same use in the world."

"Don't try to discourage me," laughed Chester,

still strong in the belief that Norah had infused in him. "We shall get something."

"It's the winter I dread," Peck confessed. "In the summer I'm a chirping grasshopper, but at this stage of the game, I begin to think about the long cold nights. In the winter, when the snow's falling, New York is as near my conception of Acheron as anything I know."

"What about the agencies?" Chester said less confidently. "I've just put my name down on Blank's books."

"You've chucked five dollars away," Peck declared.

"Are they swindlers?" the other demanded.

"I don't exactly mean that," Peck observed, "but they won't find a job for you or me. We're not easy to fit. It's all right for bookkeepers and office managers and so on, but the job we could hold down are few and far between."

"I've met cheerier companions," Chester said at length.

"And what good have they been to you?" Peck asked. "What's the use of doing the Micawber act and waiting for things to turn up? If you wait like the excellent Wilkins, you'll fetch up on Blackwell's Island. The winter isn't far

off, and I've spent a winter here and I know. The Astor Library is a good spot till nine o'clock at night, and the big hotels offer sanctuary so long as you've good clothes and don't see them too often, but sooner or later it's heigh ho for the open street and the cold winds of early morning."

Chester's theories were being rudely shaken. "But there's always manual labor," he said.

"I used to think that once," Peck told him. "You and I are both big men, and I've no doubt when you were at Yale you used to throw the heavy weights around like a young Sandow. It got our muscles up. Well and good. But what chance do we have against men who would regard this heavy work as every-day toil and have practised it ten hours a day, all their lives? Suppose you put yourself against one of these fellows at swinging a pick. For the first hour you'd outswing him, but then your hands would go back on you and they'd blister and get like rare beefsteak. And as for your back — if you want to feel what pain is, you wait till the morning after. I know what I'm talking about for I've tried it."

"Then what on earth will you do?" Chester demanded.

"Try for a cook's helper in a hotel kitchen, and

if you're clever enough, you can pick up enough to take a cook's job in a Third Avenue hash slingery. It's a good healthy job and you get all you want to eat, and it's warm."

"I can't say the prospect attracts me," Chester remarked.

Peck leaned across the marble-topped table. "And do you suppose it attracted me?" he cried. "I was just as fastidious as you were, and when I said I would condescend to work I thought the battle was won." He laughed a trifle bitterly. "I decided to carve — carve is the only word — a career in the belles-lettres. Verses, critiques, appreciations after the manner of De Quincey, and Bagehot, and written in the style of Walter Pater, and Arthur Symons. Translations, essays and sonnets. Lord, man, it amuses me even to think of it." He sighed. "Well, here I am enjoying a good dinner for once, and I ought to feel at least grateful that I met you."

"Nonsense," Chester ejaculated. "Do you think I like to take solitary meals?"

Peck lit a cigarette and puffed lovingly at it. The brand was one which he had not smoked for years. "Chinatown tea always gets into my head," he declared, "and starts me talking nine-

teen to the dozen. I'm by nature a poet, Vincent, and I have written stuff that was good, although it will never be published, dainty verse, rose leaves of thought, and all that sort of thing. Do you know what I've been doing for the past hour?"

"Can't imagine," Chester returned. He supposed this fantastical friend had perhaps composed a sonnet sequence.

"I've been eating as much as I could possibly ingest, so that if there's nothing coming tomorrow I can last the day out." He tapped his breast. "And I write dainty stuff after the manner of Alfred de Musset and hanker after Pater's golden prose."

Chester saw how thin he was, and a sense of pity swept through him. He had never before eaten with a man who was so badly in want of food.

"Where do you live?" he asked.

"Nowhere at present," Peck returned, flushing. "My landlady has a heart of brown stone and has filched my latchkey."

"Come with me," Chester said. "I have a room we can share, and my credit is good."

Peck shook his head. "Thank you," he said. "It's very good of you, Vincent, but I couldn't think of it."

Chester looked at him seriously. He had not noticed before how much shabbier he had become since he saw him last, or how loosely the clothes hung over his gaunt shoulders. "Will you let your damned silly pride rob me of a friend when I want one?" he asked.

Peck tried to answer, but his lips quivered, and he clenched his hands to keep back the lump in his throat. He had not for a year met with the sympathy that understood. Chester affected not to observe this, and walked leisurely to the counter and purchased a box of unnecessary cigarettes. When he returned Peck was master of his emotions. "It's not the sort of neighborhood one would choose," said Chester, "but the room is clean and the landlady has not seen better days."

The idea of sharing a room had been one he never contemplated, but there was never a moment when he had cause to regret his offer. He soon grew to cherish an affection for Peck which the Cornell man was not slow to reciprocate. Peck came of a family honorably connected with trade and, until his father's sudden death, and subsequent discovery of an involved estate, he had been brought up in luxury. But he soon learned, more from deduction than anything his

companion actually said, that even in a country boasting of no class distinction Chester came of a different people, a people who played polo, owned steam yachts and were *persona grata* in all the great cities of the old world.

Under Peck's guidance Chester learned many wrinkles about looking for jobs. They would go to Herald Square and get a paper hot from the great presses and, adjourning to a coffee stall hard by, scan the help-wanted columns and write their answers or call before other applicants appeared. Sometimes they obtained temporary positions, but it was a bad season and what money they jointly made served to make living but a pitiful thing. Under the influence of Chester's cheerier manner, Peck took heart of grace and wore a more courageous aspect. "Something," said the indomitable Peck, "must turn up." And Chester agreed with him. Yet he grew discouraged when, despite all his efforts, success did not smile.

One day he was walking along lower Broadway when Biggs, Enderby's ambitious managing clerk, stopped him and held out a patronizing hand.

"Come in and see me some day, Chester," he exclaimed.

"Have you any letters for me?" the other demanded.

"Not a thing," Biggs declared.

"And nothing has occurred concerning the matter I discussed with Mr. Enderby?"

Biggs shook his head. "Nothing doing. Perhaps she isn't tired of you and you're going to get another chance." He nodded familiarly and took his farewell. Chester watched him with something of a scowl. He was not yet used to being patronized by men of Biggs' type.

It was extraordinary, he thought, that Cosway had not acted. But since divorce may be obtained with varying ease in various States he supposed that an astute lawyer would take advantage of this and he might know nothing of it until all formalities were over. As for the other matter, he supposed that Mendoza, the mining magnate, had not been apprised of his existence. He had no doubt but that he would eventually receive a letter. Norah was not the kind of a woman to forget. He wondered what she thought, if, on her return from Lakewood, she had run the launch up the river and found him gone; or what Al's version of his dismissal might be. He had been tempted at first to write to her, but abandoned

the idea as one he should not, in accordance with his sense of duty to her, carry out.

The interest she had expressed in him had been born of her pity and was not to be worked upon further. His one idea was to make good; to show that he was a man who could, despite the easy training of early years, hold his own in competition with strong men. What might happen if his dreams came true he did not dare to think of, but as he compared his luck with Peck's he felt there was much to be thankful for.

As a rule the two men took their dinner — often the only meal of the day — at a Hungarian restaurant on lower Second Avenue kept by a courtly native of the dual monarchy. For five and thirty cents a four-course liberal dinner, including a large glass of white or red wine, might be obtained. It was a long, low room filled with tables holding six people. A portrait of Louis Kossuth held place of honor, and there was a big oil painting of a marriage cavalcade which always took the eye of the newcomer. It was a picture of a bride, gay in her wedding finery, meeting in her path from the church the body of her dead lover. Plunging horses and gallant men conspired to render the painting a spirited piece of work, al-

though from the standpoint of art it was not to be regarded seriously.

Peck had been looking at it one night and in an unusually silent mood. "You sometimes reproach me," he said to his companion, "for not taking a brighter outlook on life. Do you know one of the reasons I get depressed?"

Chester shook his head. "I can't imagine," he returned.

"Before my father died I was engaged to a girl," Peck said, "and when it was found I had nothing, her mother took her to Europe for a two years' trip, which was the same thing as breaking it off. Today I went into a broker's office to sell or try to sell him some automobile insurance, and sitting talking to him was his wife. It was the girl I was once going to marry." He sighed. "Like most moments of tragedy, it had a moment of farce. I was so upset, so absolutely confused, that I went out leaving my hat on a chair and found myself hatless in William Street. I couldn't go back for it for fear of meeting her again, so I bought one second hand in the Bowery for a quarter." He pointed to where it hung on a peg. "I'm not sure that it isn't a much better one than the other, so it wasn't all to the bad."

He beckoned to the waiter. "Bring me two more glasses of wine." He talked but little for the remainder of the evening.

A morning or two after this, Chester made his round of those agencies on whose books his name was. Usually he was bidden to call again, but today he was shown into the offices of one of the many bright young men who conducted the business. This official sent for his application and scanned it closely. "I'm inclined to think," he began, "that we've got a job which will fit you like a glove. I was going to write you if you hadn't come in."

"That's good news," Chester cried. "What is it?"

"We have a client now at the New Willard in Washington who has been trying for three months to get a companion-secretary. He wants a young unmarried man to travel abroad for a year and then come back here and be his confidential man down at his commission house in Leonard Street. That sounds easy, but there are a lot of qualifications essential."

"Such as?" Chester asked.

"The man he wants must be used to society and know the right kind of clothes to wear, and

be fond of sport, — our client is a fencer and golfer and crazy over automobiles. His companion has got to enter into his sports and into his work. He can easily get men who are on the business end of it, but he wants a gentleman. He wants a man who can tour Europe with him in his six-cylinder car and help him out on the language end of it. I see you can speak French and German well?"

Chester nodded, "Yes."

The other man leaned back and looked at him satisfied. "I never had a man better fitted than I think you are, and I never handled a client who's willing to pay better than this one. You can practically make your own terms. You go down to Washington right away. Mind you, for all I know the job may be filled. It wasn't up to yesterday. And you may not suit, but if I were you I'd take the risk. What about it?"

"I'll go by the midnight train," Chester said, "and get to him by the time he's ready for breakfast."

"That's good," said the other. "I see by his letter he leaves Washington tomorrow afternoon for Savannah, where he joins a yachting party. It's the chance of your lifetime, Mr. Vincent."

CHAPTER X

A TICKET TO UTOPIA

"Not our logical mensurative faculty, but our imaginative one is king over us, or I should say prophet and prince to lead us Heavenward, or magician and wizard to lead us Hellward." — *Carlyle*.

NEVER before had Chester had the opportunity to step so happily from an employment agency. As he turned into Broadway he caromed into a man apparently about to enter the building he was leaving. He apologized and passed on. A minute or so later a voice addressed him and he looked round to see the man he had jolted. He was middle aged, moderately well dressed and newly shaven. "I think, sir," he said, "I saw you coming from the Universal Employment Agency."

Chester felt already on the road to fortune and was disposed to take no offense at the question. "Your eyes did not deceive you," he answered.

"I am a believer in fate," said the stranger. "In confidence, I was about to enter the office to see, after a fruitless hunt in other directions, if

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"I could find the right man." He infused much mystery into his words.

Chester looked at him with a little suspicion. "What do you want him for?" he demanded.

The stranger looked about him cautiously. "I prefer not to tell you here," he said. "Let us take a side street." Chester followed him in silence and the man presently turned to him. "Mr. — er?" he asked interrogatively.

"Smith of Manhattan," returned Chester promptly.

"My name," the stranger explained with a touch of dignity, "is Foster, and I am a native of Massachusetts."

Chester's good spirits were undimmed by this news. He confided in the other that Foster was a good name and he had known several who bore it.

"I take it," said Foster of Massachusetts, "that you are seeking a position?"

"I was," returned the younger man, "but I think I have just secured one."

Foster plainly evinced disappointment. He sighed. "You impress me as being just the man to whom I could have made a splendid offer. Well, I suppose I'm wasting your time as well as my own."

A touch of caution came to Chester. "I haven't got it yet," he said, "and when it comes right down to it I don't know that I shall get it either."

"Mr. Smith," said Foster impressively, "I need a man of breeding, a man of the world, and above all a man of high personal courage."

"You're a most remarkable person," said the other. "Pray, Mr. Foster, have you ever fallen in with Prince Florizel of Bohemia?"

Foster looked at him closely. "I don't recall the name," he answered. "To return to my mission — I may tell you in confidence I am acting for a bigger man than I; a man who controls millions, whose name is a household word. At present he is away from the city but I keep in close touch with him and act for him. In fact," Mr. Foster of Massachusetts affirmed, "I am his *fidus Achates*. If you fulfill the conditions I lay down, my proposition will interest you, but if for all your bold exterior, you have no appetite for danger, say so and we will go our several ways."

"Really," said Chester doubtfully, "one can't exactly advertise one's self as possessing the necessary courage without overstepping the bounds of the breeding which is also a condition."

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“I could wish for no better answer,” the elder man exclaimed. “You could not have pleased me better. To come to the point, will you dine with me tonight at my hotel at half-past seven?” He named a great uptown hostelry which, although the most exclusive classes did not frequent it, was yet very expensive and modern. “Just ask for me,” said Foster, “and if I’m not waiting for you, come up into my rooms.”

Chester stared after him in amazement. To be offered two such chances within the hour was staggering. He could dine very well at the hotel and go on to Washington as he had arranged, if he had not already secured this mysterious appointment.

Peck, hearing the joyous news, prophesied great things, and demanded to be given the position which his friend discarded. It was with difficulty that the necessary money was raised for the transportation and the possible expenses in the Capital. Funds by this time were almost exhausted and Chester had parted with much of his wardrobe.

Mr. Foster was waiting in the gorgeous lobby and steered him to a secluded seat in the corner of the over-ornate dining salon. “We sha’n’t be

overheard here," he said. Then calling the head waiter by his first name, he demanded the wine list, and looked down it carefully. He scanned it for a few moments in silence and then turned suddenly to his companion. "Can you order a good dinner?" he asked.

Chester smiled. "I have some skill in it," he said.

"I shall test it," said Foster. "Between ourselves, my client is rather fond of the pleasures of the table and will appreciate your discernment, on which I shall report."

The head waiter found in Chester a man who did indeed know how to order a dinner, and appreciated such knowledge. There were too many of the great hotel's customers who enjoyed dinners only when they cost inordinately. And since Foster insisted that no expense was to be spared the best brand of champagne, though not the one most advertised, was opened.

"I am extraordinarily hungry tonight," said the Massachusetts man, who had spoken little during the course of the meal. He did not wax communicative until dessert brought with it a bottle of tawny port which had lain in cobwebs since 1863. Then he selected the most expensive

of the cigars brought for selection and demanded that the box be left upon the table. He leaned back in absolute satisfaction and fixed Chester with a glittering eye. "When you know the character and calibre of the man with whom you will be associated, you will be surprised."

"I'm that already," said Chester. "I wish you'd be definite. It's getting late and I have a train to catch."

Foster smiled. "I prophesy that you won't catch it," he said. "Now, to business. Do you know anything of Dutch Guiana?"

"Not a word," Chester returned.

"That's of no moment," Foster said. "I'll tell you, Dutch Guiana is a country about as big as this State and it's incredibly rich." He tapped his breast pocket. "I have here a letter from my friend, who will be in New York at latest in a week's time, saying that he has at last got the concession he's been after from the Holland Government. It makes my friend incredibly rich; I shall become merely a millionaire and as to you — if you make good, by this time next year you will be drawing a salary of twenty-five thousand dollars a year."

"But what for?" Chester asked.

"You will be out there in Guiana acting as our confidential man."

"But the salary is gigantic," he objected.

"So will your risks be," said Foster. "There are hostile natives, and we have to protect our miners, our gold, our machinery, our lives from them, and it isn't easy. There's a party in the Dutch parliament opposed to us, and if they get an inkling that a few niggers have been executed for murder they'll raise a popular agitation and we shall lose our concession. We want a man who can command. We want a man who can gain the respect of the high Dutch officials, and we want a healthy man who won't die of fever. Mr. Smith, do you think we can pick up a man like that for twenty-five dollars a week?"

Unmistakable enthusiasm shone in Foster's eyes. "If we could we should have hired him long ago. The man will have the handling of millions — he will be absolute master; he will have to account for everything. Is it likely we could find that man waiting for us in every agency?"

Auriferous dreams chased themselves through Chester's brain. It was a chance here offered compared with which the commission merchant

in Leonard Street faded away to insignificance. But he had a remnant of caution left. "But why in these five and a half millions did you pick on me?" he demanded.

"Personality," returned Foster. "I liked your personality and I am also a believer in luck. I was thinking I should never find the man I wanted, when there you were standing before me like magic, so to speak. I shall of course have to investigate you, but that you won't mind."

"I haven't had much business experience," Chester said dubiously.

"You can hire men to attend to details," Foster said impatiently. "You are wanted for something bigger than that. Do you suppose I can't get all the good business men I want by putting an ad in the *Sunday Herald*?"

He sat for a moment in thought. "Look here," he said with a change of voice, "I like you, Smith, and I'll be a friend to you. If you trust me blindly and place whatever sum of money you may be able to raise into my hands at once, say a thousand dollars, within thirty days this investment will more than surprise you."

Chester's heart sank and he cursed himself for a fool that he had been so taken in. "I

couldn't raise any sum of money at all," he said shortly.

Foster's face betrayed no disappointment. "That's a pity," he said. "I'm sorry. I'm in this thing up to the limit and I wouldn't advise anyone to go into a scheme that wasn't good enough for me."

"I suppose the thing's off then?" Chester asked quietly.

"Nothing of the kind," returned Foster. "This was merely an opportunity for you to make a bit apart from that. It was an offer to come in as a kind of partner instead of drawing your salary as an official alone. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll back you to the extent of nine hundred dollars. That means you have only to get one hundred by tomorrow at midday. I shall ask no obligation from you for the sum I lend. You can pay me back when it is convenient."

Chester rose to his feet. "If you'd only said this when we first met, this misunderstanding could have been saved. I have no hundred dollars to invest. I haven't anything."

"I didn't know when I met you this morning that I would care to let you in on this," Foster answered. "It only occurred to me a few min-

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utes ago. Sit down, sit down, there's plenty of time."

"Let's have a better understanding," Chester said gravely. "I repeat that I have not one cent to invest. How does that affect my chances to go out to Dutch Guiana at a big salary?"

"In no way whatever," Foster cried. "My dear young man, what a low opinion you must have of me! No, no, don't apologize," he continued. "It's the sort of caution you must have, to be the help to us I anticipate." He handed the cigars to the other and then slipped half a dozen in his vest pocket. As he did so he showed them to the head waiter, who was passing. There was no thought of concealment, as Chester saw.

"This is the brand I always smoke," he said. "And we mustn't run out of them on our little walk down Broadway. Now," he continued, rising, "up in my room I have a plan of our concession and when you are in Washington you might get a few particulars from a friend of mine there on the legal complications that might arise —" He broke off. "I guess I won't worry you about that now. It will do later if you run down and see him. But I'll get that map all the same. Wait just two minutes."

Chester almost welcomed his absence and sipped his coffee in a mood incomprehensibly glad. And his thoughts of advance in Guiana brought him to Norah. She would be glad. She had always said he could make good and would some day be offered a great opportunity. The odd jobs he had done so far were not opportunities at all. This was the fate-directed chance. As a distant tribute to Dutch progress, he ordered two curacaos. He was not so much conscious of Foster's absence as of the fact that the head waiter kept making unnecessary visits to the table. At last Chester grew uneasy and beckoned the man. "You'd oblige me," he said, "by sending to Mr. Foster's room and telling him his coffee is getting cold."

"What name shall I say?" he asked.

Chester smiled. "Say Mr. Smith of Manhattan," he answered.

The head waiter speedily returned. "There is no such guest in the house," he said icily.

"That's absurd," cried Chester. "He lives here. You surely know him by sight? He dines here habitually."

"What sort of a game do you think you're putting up?" demanded the head waiter. He

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took the bill from a subordinate and handed it to Chester courteously. "I see you had ten of those cigars," he said. "They're a dollar apiece."

"But I was his guest," protested Chester. "I was asked to dine with him."

"You ordered the dinner," said the other. "It comes to thirty-three dollars and fifty cents," he concluded.

A stout gentleman at the adjoining table heard this conversation and called his companion's attention to it. "Gee," he declared admiringly, "if I only had that fellow's gall!" Unfriendly eyes watched Chester go through his pockets. There was just half the amount of the bill. It represented his entire fortune. He looked at the head waiter, who was used to fraud of most kinds. "I haven't another cent," he told him.

"But you can no doubt get it," the man suggested. "What is your address?"

His face hardened when he heard it. People living on East Sixty-ninth Street between First and Second Avenues are not wont to order lavish dinners and smoke dollar cigars. He signaled to a neatly dressed man, who came over to Chester's side and showed his detective's badge. "It's no

use in making trouble," said the quietly dressed man. "It looks bad and don't help any."

As the Washington Limited pulled out of Jersey City an hour later, Chester was sharing a police cell with joy-riding chauffeurs and outcasts in various stages of intoxication. In the morning he was permitted to send for Peck, who came in hot haste. He promised to see the hotel proprietor and see if the case could be settled. And this he did, for when the case was called no witnesses appeared against him and Chester was discharged. The formerly sanguine young man at the employment agency regarded his chance of ultimate success as small. "You might get him at Savannah," he said, "but it's a risk. Do you care to try it?"

Chester shook his head. "I can't afford to," he said.

"I'll write," the other told him, "and if anything turns up I'll let you know. Call in again. Good morning."

Thus it was that the commission business in Leonard Street and the concession in Dutch Guiana showed smiling faces for a moment, then, like mirages in the desert, faded away.

CHAPTER XI

UNDER QUEENSBERRY RULES

“When Heaven is about to confer a great office on any man, it first exercises his mind with suffering, and his sinews and bones with toil. It exposes his body to hunger, subjects him to extreme poverty, and confounds his undertakings. In all these ways it stimulates his mind, strengthens his nature, and supplies his incompetencies.” — *Mencius*.

THE two comrades found themselves reduced to a sorry plight. Without money, without position, with the thermometer dropping and the rigors of winter upon them, they began to suffer. They experienced to the full those hardships inseparable from their condition in a city over-thronged with applicants for work who were better fitted than they for the competition. Now and then they secured temporary jobs, often at work which was repulsive, and managed to keep their room and partake of a meal a day, but it was a bitter struggle that sapped even Chester's hope at times. Each week he would inquire from Biggs if any communications

had come for him, but the answer was always the same. Latterly he had taken to spending a nickel for a telephone call; he did not want Enderby to see that he was becoming shabby. Unjustly, he still blamed his old companion for lack of interest now that he was fortuneless, not knowing that there were many weary hours when the lawyer thought of him with affection and regret.

It was always after this call at Enderby's office that his old life was brought back with peculiar vividness. He knew that no one man was ever indispensable to the happiness of a set, but he was not guilty of conceit when he admitted that he had always been a leader in pleasures and sports. The Meadowbrook men must miss him, the polo enthusiasts at Point Judith must wonder what had become of their famous number two, and he would be talked about in those great Long Island country houses where he had always been ready to dance till daybreak or organize theatricals or arrange gymkhanas.

And his defection, his inexplicable dropping out, had, indeed, brought sorrow to more than one old friend. Many conjectures were made as to the cause but the data they had to go on was small. At the last game of cards Chester had been abso-

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lutely sober and had paid his very large losses with his customary air of good humor. Osmund and Frankel spoke of it openly and had no definite reasons for attributing his absence to their gains. Only Enderby, when appealed to, developed a certain air of irritation. "When he feels good and ready," he snapped, "Chester will come back." The lawyer told nobody of the interview after the card game or the visit to his Wall Street office. It would argue, he felt, a certain ungraciousness on his friend's part, and he was too loyal to wish this idea to get abroad.

Very often, during the dreary months, Chester would come by night to Norah's house and look up, from the shadow of the trees opposite, to the great house whose windows were brilliantly lighted. A shadow at a blind made his heart beat quicker. It might, he thought, be the slim figure of the girl who was responsible for the fact that he had not yet lost his courage. He was no longer tempted to write to her. He was confident that when the time was ripe the mining man she spoke of would send for him. To that end he spent many hours in the Astor Library and the reading-room of the Cooper Union — a less pleasant resort but open sometimes at more

convenient hours — where he read eagerly books on mining and metallurgy.

Once when he was watching the house in Fifth Avenue the door opened and he saw some ladies in opera cloaks descend to the limousine car in waiting. He hurried off lest she might catch a glimpse of him and be disappointed at his raiment. He wanted her to think of him as one who was succeeding. This weary waiting for better things was little to a Chester's liking, but it was a discipline which insensibly gave him a steadfast strength which had never been his before. And he gained, too, in those months a broader sympathy with his fellows and a knowledge of life which could never allow him to sink back into the careless existence that lay behind him.

Peck was the first of them to get work. He came in radiant to the Second Avenue restaurant one night to explain that he had been appointed as a member of a crew of men who were delivering samples to various cities. The art of delivering samples, he explained, was not one which required technical training, but more than appearance, celerity or personality was a character for honesty. He had been informed by the man who

engaged him that the samples and literature of advertising campaigns were oftentimes not distributed at all but dropped into some neighboring sewer. The men with whom Peck was to travel had been vouched for as reliable. He would receive one dollar a day and all expenses, and his rail fare would be paid to Philadelphia, the first city of his activities. He was sorry to leave Chester and grieved that he could not get him a similar position, but swore to report the first reprehensible act of his companions and recommend his friend for the vacancy.

New York without his friend was very dull to Chester, who lived for a fortnight after his departure on the remnants of his wardrobe; every night found him feverishly rubbing up his surveying and assaying. Then, unexpectedly, he obtained a job. He was wandering along Greenwich Street one day when outside a trucking stable he saw a sign hanging, "Driver Wanted."

He went into the yard and was interviewed by the "boss," who was always associated in his mind with a red tie, a stub of evil-smelling cigar and a large ear constantly glued to the telephone. The boss glanced at the applicant without enthusiasm. He had just interviewed two others

far more to his liking, but they had sundry bad records against them. One in moments of alcoholic aberration was used to dispose of his horses to the highest bidder and with cronies of his kind imbibe the proceeds. The other had been in state prisons and was under the constant supervision of the police. Green men, new to the city, were easily to be had — there were employment agencies for aliens at every corner, but he needed a man who knew the city. Finally, since time was an object, he took Chester on probation and led him into the stable and he was shown his team.

They were great seventeen-hand bays in excellent condition, and one of them — he was roman-nosed and had over-much white in his eyes — possessed a savage disposition. He evinced this when, at the foreman's command, his new driver started to harness him. This was, strictly speaking, not a driver's work, but the boss invariably chose this as a test for sizing up a new man. Caligula — for so Chester called the bad-tempered bay, and thus named he still frets his way along West Street — seeing a new man, essayed his usual disquieting tricks, while his stall-mates and the stable hands watched gleefully.

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Caligula's equine sense of humor was in its essence unkind. There was nothing he enjoyed so much as when the halter was taken from him as penning his man in a corner of his box and there biting at him. And had Chester been a man unused to horses he might have provided more sport, but he noted the bay's wicked eye and suddenly gripped him by the tender part of the nozzle and slipped the bridle over his head and bitted him before the animal could understand what had happened.

"Ain't the first time he's been near a horse," the boss grunted. The yard foreman said nothing. He disliked the new man at first sight. He was wont to assert that any fool could drive a carriage and pair, but it took a driver to steer a truck in lower Manhattan. And Chester found he was right, for the heavy van with its loose-swinging pole demanded a knack with which he was as yet unfamiliar. He showed this when driving out of the yard, for Caligula, going furiously at his collar, swung the truck round at a dangerous pace. Lacking an overcoat — for Peck had one and a pawnbroker the other — Chester made himself a cloak of sacking and started upon his day's work. It was so cold that he was forced to

expend a grudging thirty-five cents for a pair of driving gloves.

Early in the afternoon of his first day he discovered an ancient enemy in the shape of the policeman regulating traffic by the Barclay Street crossing on West Street. A few weeks previously he had engaged in an altercation with him over a gross case of cruelty to animals. His ready sympathies had been engaged at the sight of an old white horse driven by a Greek. Spavined, laminitic, with capped knees and hocks, the poor beast suffered from every equine infirmity and was even to a child's eye unfit for work. When the officer refused to interfere, Chester gave him such a tongue-lashing that he narrowly escaped arrest. It was this inefficient policeman who observed with glee Chester handling his team of bays. An officer's power is great on West Street and he proceeded to make his enemy's life a burden.

To one like Chester, who, although a New Yorker, did not know the various ferries used by the many express companies or the docks usually driven to by them, there was much to learn. And this lack of knowledge brought his horses into dire peril of collision. Fate usually halted him for

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one reason or another directly before the jubilant constable.

He would raise a hand and stay Chester's course while a score of other vans were allowed passage. And when other truckmen learned that the autocrat of the crossing "had it in" for the new man, whom they disliked on general principles, they aided him. There were certain hours in West Street when the traffic was especially dense, a mass of horses and vans, with the little horse-cars sandwiched whistling in between. In those moments the harried pedestrian would seek the shelter of the wood islands of refuge and thus escape the hurrying streams. It became a very merry sport among the younger truckmen to drive Chester at the expense of his bays' legs directly in front of these islands and there keep him nursed until traffic ceased.

Few cities have thoroughfares where heavier vehicular traffic is seen than New York's West Street, and fewer still have more abominable paving. Hardly to be escaped are the many concavities wherein wheels may sink, and a heavily laden truck may remain there, a wheel in a hole, the driver finding a difficulty in extricating it without extraneous aid. As a rule some good

Samaritan comes along and by his own initiative or the request of a policeman — who as a rule manages these things admirably — hitches an empty van to the laden one and hauls it from its predicament.

Hauling a heavy load of canned goods one day Chester's wheel found such a pit and he stood in need of help. He was so grateful to a man with a three-horse empty truck that he did not notice the assisting rope formed an obtuse angle with his pole. Consequently when the three horses went off with a jerk, instead of being helped, Caligula, straining at his collar, was thrown off his balance and fell with the benign Julius Cæsar on top of him. The incident was richly humorous to the onlookers and gave the chuckling policeman innumerable opportunities of airing a nimble wit. The horses, fortunately, were undamaged and the harness was not much the worse. The foreman's quick eye noticed it, however, and he said things which Chester strove not to answer. But his temper was not improved by the physical suffering brought about by hunger and fatigue and he presently gave the man the lie direct. For a moment he thought the foreman was going to spring at him but the incident passed without blows.

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The following night when he brought his horses into their stable and was supplementing the stableman's efforts to groom them, the foreman, Boyle by name, called out, "Hi there, you, I want a word when you're through."

"All right," Chester responded briefly; he supposed it had to do with the morrow's work. "Well?" he demanded a minute later, "what is it?" He was tired, sore from lifting heavy weights, and he desired sleep more than anything else, and wanted to hasten back to his room and forget his surroundings.

"You called me a liar last night," snarled Boyle. "Did you mean it?"

Chester saw that half a dozen other men were gathered near; something evidently was premeditated. "Yes," he said squarely. He flushed at the remembrance of the quarrel.

"No man calls me a liar and gets away with it," said Boyle slowly, "and you ain't going to neither."

"What are you going to do about it?" Chester asked.

"I'm going to lick you," the foreman said.

Chester cast his eye over the other's form and was not reassured thereby. Of his own height,

the man was tremendously broad, with great arms and shoulders promising abnormal strength; he remembered seeing the man lift some lead piping that two others were straining with. Ranged behind the foreman were now a dozen men, drivers, stable helpers and hangers-on, all playing for popularity with the bully. They regarded this raw hand as another chopping block for their champion.

The foreman was certain of victory and offered an alternative. "If y'er afraid," he sneered, "you can apologize. Get right down on your knees and tell the boys you are a dirty liar and I'll let yer go." He spoke with a sudden snarl that showed his strong yellow teeth. "Which is it?"

"It won't be apologizing," returned Chester, still outwardly calm.

"You want a licking then!"

"It won't be that either," his driver told him. There was a look of consternation on the face of his audience. Were they to be cheated of their sport? Was he going to call police aid and escape?

Boyle grinned. "That won't work," he cried. "All the doors is locked and you can't get out."

Chester looked at him with a scorn that stung.

"If you were a little thicker in the head," he remarked, "there wouldn't be any room for your eyes in your skull. Do you suppose I want to run away from a broken-down tough like you?"

"You will before I'm through with you," Boyle cried. "We usually pull these little events off in the loft overhead. That agreeable?"

"I don't mind where you're licked," returned Chester. He was filled with a rage that was almost ungovernable. Weak in body, with blistered hands and absolutely out of condition, he was to be butchered to make a truckmen's holiday. A year ago he would have taken odds on himself with easy mind; but a year ago he was in training and weighed a hundred and ninety pounds. Today, with months of insufficient feeding, he turned the scale at thirty pounds less. He determined to try the professional scheme of making his opponent blindly angry.

"It would be safer," he said urbanely, "to get yourself a padded floor before I start."

Boyle was too astonished to be angry. He was not acquainted with that phrase of the unknown poet which runs, "*Quem Jupiter vult perdere dementat prius*," but he had his own adaptation

of it. He turned to his friends. "The guy must be nutty," he exclaimed.

The large loft was well lighted with gas and an improvised ring answered the purpose well enough. A sporting saloon-keeper from West Broadway, who was introduced facetiously as Mr. O'Grady a well known Parisian referee, consented to act in an official capacity. He had refereed other fights in this big room, which was conveniently set back from the street, and arranged details quickly.

The spectators, used to seeing their foreman victorious, were sorry for Chester in a sneaking way and many of them cordially hated Boyle, but they could not afford to seem other than his partisans. Boyle's word always "went" with the boss, and they were all men with families and nothing saved.

Chester, white-faced but smiling, stripped but poorly when compared with his burly enemy. He kept up a stinging fire of taunts, but they were either too subtle for the other or else Boyle was too confident of triumph to heed them, for they had not apparently worried him. He would know as soon as they started what chance he had, and the time listening for O'Grady's signal passed like

hours. The only sound he could hear was the thumping of his heart against his ill covered ribs.

Chester soon found that his foe was slow and knew nothing of foot-work or the finer points of the game: — but he was overwhelmingly strong and swung thick arms like flails about him. On points in a limited bout even in his present condition Chester knew he could outpoint him, but this was to be a finish fight under Queensberry rules and his reserve of strength could not last many rounds.

Boyle's usual opponents were vigorous men like himself, who waded in and took and gave all the punishment that strength unaided by science could inflict. But here was an adversary who easily evaded his terrific swings and gibed at him the while and pecked him daintily on the mouth, nose and eye. It was true that these blows lacked force, but they stung and after a time he felt his left eye was closing. He became irritated beyond measure and shouted, "Why don't you stand up and fight? What are you running away for?"

Chester ducked a furious jab and asked with his sneering smile, "Were you trying to hit me?"

Boyle, whose idea of defensive fighting was

elementary, abandoned whatever of caution his adversary had inspired in him and made terrific efforts to beat down Chester's guard. By this time the men were cheering wildly. Those who saw in Boyle's cut and bleeding face, defeat, now openly cheered for Chester. But Chester knew, and O'Grady and such as were skilled in ring craft, that it would take more than this to stop the big man, whereas Chester imperceptibly was slowing down. His nimble foot-work had its disadvantages.

Suddenly Chester changed his tactics and the fight to the onlookers became less spectacular. If he was thin from want of food, Boyle was plainly a sinner in the other direction. Chester now directed all his attention to body punishment and abandoned to some extent his defensive methods. Three times Boyle's swings caught him, each time inflicting heavy punishment, but steadily he played his game, and soon Boyle was grunting in discomfort.

At first this play for the body hurt Chester more than his opponent. Under the vest which he had not deigned to take off Boyle wore suspenders with cruelly large buckles and they cut Chester's knuckles when a blow landed on them.

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O'Grady saw the danger and yelled, all regardless of the etiquette of the referee, "Look out for your kidneys, Jim."

But Jim was too maddened with desire to smash the loathed face of his sneering enemy, to take this counsel. And a sickening fear was added to his rage when he felt fainter and knew that his blows lacked force. He made a gallant effort to finish the fight before it was too late but he was not of the stuff to do so. When the last call for supreme endurance came it was the thoroughbred who responded. When the last round was begun Chester stepped into the middle of the ring; all the lights in the room seemed like red stars a long way off and the faces of the men were blurred and out of focus and the noise had died away to a silence like that of death. As Boyle hurled himself in a despairing effort against his frailer antagonist, Chester nerved himself for the supreme effort. When his last blow flashed into Boyle's gross body and the bully fell, he could himself barely stand upright. Slowly, reluctantly he heard O'Grady count out the fallen man. And it was not until then that he fainted.

Toward the early hours of the morning he tossed on his bed almost delirious. He thought Mr.

O'Grady was torturing him with red hot irons and found that his hands had swollen up to an incredible size. It took him an hour to dress. His clumsy fingers could not fasten his collar and it was impossible to hold a razor. For the first time in many years he started the day unshaven.

There were few men about when he came to the yard. Old Mac, a stableman who had never before spoken, offered him a plug of tobacco to chew but his facial inequalities precluded the acceptance of it. His horses seemed that morning to be imbued with a great joy of living and lifted their feet as though they were hackneys. This activity on their part added to the torture of holding the reins, and he had never suffered so acutely.

Union Square at this time stood out among New York's streets as monumentally bad for driving. Some repairs to the car tracks had dropped the level of the road four inches from them and there were many obstacles to encounter. It so happened that to avert a collision with a trolley Chester was forced to take this lower level. The jerk almost threw him off his seat and the reins, hanging for the moment loose on his

horses' backs, gave them the opportunity they desired and they raced up Fourth Avenue at speed. Phaethon was no more able to check the steeds of Helios than Chester to control his great bays.

An unlucky express wagon drawn by a single horse crossed them at Eighteenth Street. Seeing it, Caligula, infusing Julius Cæsar with his spirit, sprang forward. Like the reincarnated steeds of some ancient British war chariot they bore down on the obstructing van and wrecked it instantly. It was not until his team was at the mouth of the tunnel by the Park Avenue Hotel that Chester got them under control. Then, without making inquiry as to the inflicted damage, he called at his destination on the East Side.

He heard nothing of the accident when he returned to the yard and hoped that it would go unreported. It was a rich company whose van he had smashed and he could ill afford to confess his share in the matter. On Saturday, when he was back from a long and wearisome day's work, he saw the boss casting surly looks at him. At seven he had cleaned his horses and himself and went to the office; it was the happy moment when he would receive the twelve dollars due to him. The

office was small and wholly occupied by the boss, the telephone and the cuspidor.

"Why didn't you report that accident?" the boss demanded.

"I hoped they wouldn't find out who did it," Chester returned.

"Well, they did, see," snapped the other, "and I've got to pay for a half-baked sissyfied college boy like you." Any mark of unwelcome refinement was stamped by the boss as proceeding from a centre of the higher education.

"When you come in," he continued, "I could see you was no good, but I was kind 'er sorry for you so I put you on. What did you do in return? You've broke two of Boyle's ribs and he's out of business for a month, and then you go and let me in for three hundred and fifty dollars worth of damages."

"I'm sorry," said Chester simply. "It was an accident pure and simple."

"Who the hell cares for your sorrow," snapped the boss. "Is that going to pay me three hundred and fifty dollars?" He tossed the pay envelope to the other. "I ought to hold this up on you but you might come around worrying and I'd pay twice that never to see your face again." He lashed himself into a fury, "See here, pinhead, if

ever I give a job to a feller like you again, I'll be chained to the hottest part of hell. No, sir, I wouldn't, not if you was to come with your tongue hanging out of your mouth."

The boss concluded with a string of polychromatic oaths which commanded attention if not respect. It was a fine piece of invective and Chester told him so.

The boss looked at him sourly. "Get out," he said. "It gives me a pain to hear your voice."

As Richard Chester passed into the streets, he perceived a knot of men outside and recognized them as belonging to the employ he had just left. For a moment his heart was in his mouth; he imagined this to be another hostile demonstration and he was faint from hunger and had not enough strength left to fight a blind centenarian. From the group, old Mac stepped out, old Mac who had that morning offered him a chew of plug.

The old man held out a hand and took Chester's in with a grip that made him wince. "Say, young feller," he observed, "you're all right. Me and the boys want you to have a little supper on us. We none of us hadn't no use for you at first, but the way you trimmed that unmentionable Boyle was all right."

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The others crowded about him and his wounded hand burned from the vigor of their grasps. He had leaped into popularity and it was pleasant and strange to him to see that he was regarded with wholly friendly feelings. To some underground bar hardby they took him, and since his swollen jaws made eating steak a hardship, they filled him with clam chowder and beer. He found that the elimination of their late foreman was indeed an emancipation for them. Many had tried to down him but until now he had always won. He had for some years extorted from each man a percentage of his weekly pay and this day was the first time they had ever been able to keep the whole of what they had earned. Chester they hailed as a deliverer. There would be time enough in the weeks of Boyle's convalescence to get the ear of the boss, and this night was their festival of deliverance. He was not allowed to buy a drink or to expend a nickel of his pay and he found himself escorted to his dwelling by a set of men who, although before his forced inclusion in their midst they would have seemed to him coarse and depraved, he now allowed to be good honest men and loyal comrades.

CHAPTER XII

CHESTER MEETS HIS LADY

"A principal fruit of friendship is the ease and discharge of the fulness and swellings of the heart." — *Bacon*.

CHESTER passed most of Sunday in bed and arose on the following day easier in body and happier in the possession of sufficient money to pay his room rent, get his overcoat from sheltering avuncular care and look about for work again. But when he was up, he found that he was still weak and took his way into Central Park. He told himself that he would bask in the companionship of squirrels but his heart beat the faster as he came to the area in which alone the Godfrey children were allowed to play. It was a mild, balmy day succeeding, with that sudden change for which New York weather is noted, one of cold and gloom.

The children were there, bored from the stupidity of a well-meaning nurse, and ran to greet him eagerly. He could be relied upon to tell them

stories that were not hackneyed and Cyril shared with him equine tastes.

It was while he was thus engaged — all oblivious of squirrels — that Mrs. Godfrey, training a powerful pair of binoculars upon the seat which he had chosen, saw they were talking to a strange man. Her exclamation brought Norah to her side. She instantly knew it was Chester and without saying anything to her cousin, dressed and walked toward the group. She had often wondered what had happened to the man who so interested her and felt genuine pleasure at the opportunity of meeting him again. As he rose to his feet and bowed over her hand, she felt she was flushing. It was annoying to find that she could not preserve with this man the equanimity which had been the despair of so many. It had been her intention to admit having seen him from the window, but might not such a course, she argued, make it appear that she was too glad to see him? What she did say was, "How surprising to find you here!"

"The beautiful day tempted me," he answered, "and I brought a bag of peanuts for the squirrels."

She looked very radiant and young, he thought. The hand clasp, which by reason of his bruised

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hands still brought him discomfort, gave him a pang which was more than physical pain; it reminded him of the immeasurable distance between him and this rich girl — between the day manual laborer and the heiress. He knew that such toil, while it had no power to debase him, must place him poles apart from her. The squirrels were transparent inaccuracies, he admitted to himself. He had come to this spot, hoping to see Cyril and hear of Cyril's aunt, and now his wish was gratified, he did not know what to say.

"How thin you are!" she exclaimed impulsively. "Have you been ill?"

"Not at all," he responded. He supposed hard work and one meal a day must have made a difference in his appearance as well as his feelings.

"I'm just going for a stroll," she said. "I haven't been out all day. Will you come, too?"

"I'd be delighted to," he said eagerly. It seemed a good fortune to which he had not dared to look forward.

"I'm afraid you have been ill," she said, when they were out of earshot of the nurse and children. She looked at him closely. "And haven't you been in some accident?"

He laughed. "The children would have it

that I'd been thrown out of an automobile but it wasn't anything of the kind. One evening, I ran against a hard substance and rather jarred my face."

She walked on wondering what it was that had wrought such a change in him. When last she remembered him he was tanned brown, was fuller in the face and without the look and lines of suffering she now saw. She did not refer to him again until she was within sight of her house.

"I live with my cousin," she said, "Mrs. Godfrey, the children's mother. She always preserves very kindly memories of you. Will you lunch with us some day soon?"

"That's awfully kind of you," he said. "I'd like to immensely but I'm afraid I can't." It thrilled him with gratitude that she proposed to introduce him to her family life; it banished the idea that her interest in him was one wholly of charity.

"Why not?" she demanded. "Do you want to disappoint me?"

He looked her straight in the eyes. "If you know how much more disappointed I am; you wouldn't think that."

"But," she persisted, "why won't you?"

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“For the last week,” he said, “I have been doing heavy work — trucking work — and my hands are blistered and the nails cracked and I could never allow them to be seen at your table.”

They walked on in silence for a hundred yards and she looked at him with a smile. “Then it wasn’t shipwreck,” she whispered. “You’ve stopped drifting, just as I knew you would.”

“Did you,” he said, eagerly, “did you really think I would?”

“I was convinced of it,” she returned. “But, Mr. Vincent, you can’t get out of it as easily as that.”

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“If you can’t come to lunch or dinner, you shall come to a dance and wear white gloves, and nobody but I will know and I shall be proud of you. Are you going to disappoint me?”

“I should just love to come,” he cried, “but — ”

She made a little gesture of despair. “Really you are the most *difficile* person I ever invited. But what?”

“My old world,” he said gravely, “I am not anxious to meet it. There may be people who knew me a year ago. I want to avoid them,”

"I'll give you a list at once," she said, "if that's the only trouble." She repeated thirty names of people unknown and then added at last Marjery Rosse and Billy Osmund.

"Osmund is one of them," he said, "who knew me. I think meeting him would rather unsettle me."

"I'll drop him," she returned, betraying no further interest in the name. "I shall invite them for next Wednesday week." She hesitated, "I expect my cousin will give a dinner party before the dance. Is it out of the question for you to accept?"

He thought of his hands, bruised, cut, disfigured, unsightly. It would take a month to get them presentable again. "I should prefer to come in after the dinner," he answered.

"We shall begin at ten," she told him. "It won't be a formal supper but one that one can take into odd corners and eat."

He looked at her gratefully. "I sha'n't have to unmask, you mean."

"It will be delightful," she cried, her eyes sparkling; "we have a perfect floor and nearly all the men dance well."

"May I have the supper dance?" he asked.

"Aren't you rather impatient?" she returned.

"Consider my disabilities," he cried. "The men who will be dining will be certain to ask you, and when I come later, everything will be gone."

"I suppose I'd better," she smiled. "Well, I'll save the supper dance."

"I want more than that," he exclaimed. "What is one dance? I know perfectly well that by ten there won't be a blank line on your programme."

"Not if I save one for you," she said.

"Will you?" he cried eagerly. She thought how young he had become in the last hour.

"If I remember it," she said. "Really, Mr. Vincent, don't look so distressed. I'm not nearly so much in request as you seem to think."

"Dare you to prove it by leaving three dances open?" he demanded.

"If you are not a very good dancer, I shall repent," she said. "I'm most inconsiderately impatient of a clumsy partner, however well meaning he may be. I will save the dances under the condition that if you don't come up to my standard, you must surrender me to a better dancer."

"Done," he cried, "I agree."

"Aren't you rather sure of yourself?" she asked.

"It sounded conceited of me, I admit," he told her, "but I've danced so much that I can't help being as good as the average."

"I am anxious to see what your average is," she returned. She looked at him fixedly for a moment. "I sometimes wonder if I have met you before. Once or twice I have thought there was something familiar in your voice. It might have been at a dance; if it was I shall remember on Wednesday week. I have a good dancing memory."

He had always dreaded that she might make some such remark and often wondered why she had not. Surely, he sometimes felt, she must recall that night at the Beau Sejour.

"If I had ever danced with you," he prevaricated, "I should never forget."

He was almost thankful that her nearness to the Godfrey house prevented further questioning. "*Au revoir*," she said, holding out her hand. He watched her till the door shut her from his view. Then he walked down the avenue no longer depressed, bruised in body and hopeless of the fu-

ture. She was still his friend and not ashamed of him.

Peck awaited him, Peck of Cornell, who had blithely gone forth to deliver samples. He unfolded a tale of woe. After two weeks of work, he had been paid off, and a fellow craftsman whose probity was not what was represented had stolen his money and the return ticket to New York. Peck had beaten his way home exhausted.

Chester, whose world was now rosy-hued, declined to allow his friend to brood over such trifles. It would be added copy for the autobiography he must some day write, and he haled his companion to the cheerful Hungarian restaurant and brought him back into a contented frame of mind. And when Peck had eaten well, and a tall glass of red wine, all for thirty cents, had accompanied the meal, he outrivalled anyone Chester had ever met in planning auriferous futures. And as they climbed up the steps into Second Avenue, Peck chortled gleefully at the gently falling snow.

"Whence this merriment?" his friend demanded, who saw in it only discomfort. "Is your poet's fancy charmed?"

"Poet's fancy be hanged," cried Peck, "I see ten dollars each for us, if this keeps on long enough. It isn't so bad," he added, "so long as we have good stout shoes. That is, of course, if you're game."

"Do you suppose a true blue son of old Eli is going to back down to any Cornell man who ever swung a shovel?" he demanded.

But it was bitter work, all the same, yet nothing else offered itself and he was not of those who could accept charity. Working on lower Broadway, he saw Enderby, fur-coated, cross the street before him. The lawyer did not glance in his direction. He was too busy at the moment thinking of his former friend, Richard Chester, to spare any time to scan the groups of snow-shovelers.

At the end of the week — and the fall was heavy for early winter — Chester and Peck had earned ten dollars. Of this, some went to placate a foreman; but they were well used by this time to petty graft, and protest was always useless.

When Wednesday came, Peck watched with some astonishment his companion laying out the paraphernalia of evening dress; he said nothing for a while as Chester selected gloves and tie with

meticulous care. At last he blurted out, "Are you going to a wedding?"

"I am setting out my funeral apparel," Chester said gravely.

During the long hours he had worked in the snow, he had come to a certain determination which was to guide him in his relations with Norah.

It was imposing upon her good nature to keep up this strangely begun acquaintance and it was a discipline which he was not strong enough to bear, if his vow to keep silence was to be observed.

He thought of her with a feeling that was compounded of love and adoration. When she knew he was the paid employé of coarse Alfred Congdon, she had not shrunk from him. And when he had told her his hands, calloused from rough work, could not be seen at her table, she had still preserved her air of charming friendliness and comprehension. And he was too thoroughly a man of the world not to gauge accurately the sweetness of her nature. And with the caution that was being daily impressed upon him he saw how, were he an unscrupulous man, she had acted with great unwisdom.

It would be better for both of them were he, after the dance to which he looked forward with an intensity of delight, to drop out of sight. If he could make good, and if the mining man really made him a proposition, he would work with all the strenuousness with which he had once played and there might be a future too dazzling to think of. But until he heard from Norah's friend, he would apply himself to brushing up his old time knowledge and keep away from her.

"Yes," he said, when Peck betrayed astonishment at his answer, "I am laying out my funeral raiment."

CHAPTER XIII

HIS RESURRECTION

"First say to yourself what you would be, and then do what you have to do. For in almost everything else we see this to be the practice. Olympic champions first determine what they would be and then act accordingly. To a racer in a longer course there must be one kind of diet, walking, anointing and exercise; to one in a shorter all these must be different, and to a pentathlete still more different." — *Epictetus*.

TEN of the twenty couples invited to Norah's dance were bidden to dinner, and among them, Renalls and Ronald Monmouth. Although by this time the latter was sure that his cousin did not care for him and he was himself under the influence of a leading light of the musical comedy stage, he still delighted in paying her attentions which annoyed the financier. It was a sign of emasculation, Renalls contended, this undue reverence to women, and he secretly deplored the politeness which men of a higher social circle than his own, were used to assume to their womenfolk.

Monmouth had asked for her programme and

been refused. "Wait till we get into the ball room," she laughed.

"Were you saving it as a birthday present for me?" Renalls demanded a little later when he secured a quiet moment with her.

"Is it your birthday?" she inquired.

"Didn't you remember it?" he said almost wistfully. "I'm forty today."

"May you live to be a hundred!" she cried.

"But your programme?" he protested.

"What is the good of filling it before the dance commences?" she said. "Of course I shall dance with Ronald and you but I'm not going to allow you or him to take up more than I can spare." She was not anxious for him to see Chester's initials occupying so many dances.

"I'll take my chance then," Renalls returned, unflurried.

It was not a large ball room but it was perfect in its proportions and the decorations had been entrusted to a florist who was also a color artist. At ten o'clock all the guests were there except Chester and another couple, and in the minstrels' gallery the musicians were tuning their instruments. She was bitterly disappointed at this defection but the dance could not be postponed.

Ronald Monmouth was the first to notice the initials R. V. "Who is R. V.?" he demanded with a cousin's privileged intimacy. Renalls, standing by her, looked into her face as the question was asked.

She answered without hesitation. "A Mr. Vincent," she returned.

"Never heard of him," her cousin declared. "Where does he come from?"

"I never press my friends for their antecedents," she retorted. "I thought that was the custom of the *nouveaux riches*."

Monmouth turned to the financier. "You'd better look out, Renalls; I told you of her liking for mysterious strangers."

"What's that?" Renalls demanded.

"Ronald's exaggerations, merely," she told him.

"Not a bit of it," her cousin answered. "First there was the mysterious gentleman with the red face, the husky voice and the wig. His passion was for flinging money, whenever asked, for fool charities. Next was the unknown disciple of Isaac Walton who passed his blameless life paddling about the Hudson in a small boat."

Renalls looked at the girl keenly; there was no



Renalls looked at the girl keenly; there was no mistaking the flush on her face. Page 248.

mistaking the flush on her face. "Who was it?" he snapped.

She turned to Monmouth. "Who told you?" she inquired.

"Cyril and 'Ginia," he returned. "Don't blush, my dear child, I think these mysteries are the spice of life and I'm bent on establishing your reputation for the mysterious. Mr. Renalls, with that hard-headed common sense which marks him out as a leading representative of our country's financial life, seems to doubt me. Perhaps he knows this unknown R. V. who has absorbed so much of your programme. I confess I don't."

She looked at him with heightened color. "I must introduce you," she said. Coming toward her, cool and debonair and garbed with the quiet perfection which can mark masculine costume no less than that of women, was Richard Chester. She smiled and held out her hand.

"Let me introduce Mr. Renalls to you," she said, "and my cousin, Mr. Monmouth. This is Mr. Vincent."

The three exchanged formal suspicious greetings. Ronald had noticed that she made the fine distinction of introducing him and Renalls to this

stranger and not the stranger to the two leaders of social life and high finance. Renalls was not one to notice this. There was a look on his face which Monmouth had never seen before. For the moment glaring jealousy flamed up and transformed the usually quiet face into a mask of all the passions. Monmouth was almost startled. "Good God!" he muttered, "That's the true Renalls, is it?"

There was another incident strangely disturbing to the girl which happened almost at this moment. She had barely introduced Chester to her cousin and co-hostess when the other late comers arrived. The girl was a dainty, petite creature named Marjery Rosse and the man was none other than the Billy Osmund whose name she had excised from her list. The man had been intercepted by another group of people but the girl pressed on. "Isn't my bringing Billy a surprise?" she demanded.

"I asked Sigurd Stanton," Norah answered.

"No, darling," Marjery corrected. "You asked me to bring my fiancé. Billy and I only got engaged last night. Mr. Stanton and I broke it off the day before yesterday. Of course you don't mind?"

"I'm delighted," cried Norah with sinking heart. She looked up at Chester. "I couldn't help it," she whispered.

"I know," he made reply. "Don't worry."

Then as Osmund was following in his fiancée's wake, Chester stopped him.

"Billy," he said in a low voice, "don't say anything to me. We're not supposed to know each other. I'll get introduced to you directly. I'm a Mr. Vincent, remember."

Without a word the other passed on. It was incomprehensible to him, but Chester would explain later and that was enough for him.

Meanwhile Renalls, waked from his belief that Norah cared for no man and might therefore come to entertain in time a tenderer regard for him, took careful stock of Chester. "So far as appearances were concerned, he instantly conceded the palm to the stranger. The new man was better looking than he, carried himself more finely and was incomparably a better dancer. From inquiry he could learn nothing about him. In a room where all the guests knew one another well, Vincent was the only unknown. Later in the evening he asked Billy Osmund, "Who is that man, I wonder?"

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Osmund looked bored at the question. "You've never met him then?"

Osmund had detected the malice in the other's eye. It was well known that the financier was a good hater and it was not Osmund's intention to satisfy his curiosity.

"Never," said Renalls, "I've never even heard of him. I can't think where Miss Ellis picked him up."

"Do you usually criticise your hostess's friends?" he demanded, moving from the financier's side to join Miss Rosse.

Renalls shrugged his shoulders and offered his arm to Mrs. Godfrey, with whom he danced laboriously, keeping his eye the while on Norah and the stranger. There was a look of animation on her face which he had never been able to evoke even in the days when she admired his abilities as a financial fighter.

Mrs. Godfrey, who waltzed very well and was a pretty woman in her plump, opulent style, was plainly piqued at his inattention.

"I sha'n't dance with you any more," she declared.

"Why not?" he demanded bluntly. "Have I trod on your toes or torn your train?"

"You're looking at everyone but me," she pouted.

"I'm trying to place that man dancing with Norah," he said craftily. "Where did she meet him?"

"I can't remember," she said. "At some dance or another, I suppose. No," she added, "I've never met him before. He's Norah's friend, not mine." She had not been told yet that this was the rescuer of her children. She went off at a tangent. "Norah does the queerest things; she arranged this dance without consulting me at all and everybody accepted." She sighed enviously. "They had to break other engagements but they always do for her."

He looked at Norah critically. "You must admit that she is lovely," he said.

"Of her type, yes," Mrs. Godfrey admitted. She preferred that woman should have a majestic presence and weigh more than the tables on weighing machines allow. Lack of exercise and a pleasure in eating had robbed her neck and chin of all lines of beauty and she was not pleased with her escort; it was a moment, too, when she felt she detested her cousin. She was rendered still more impatient by the fact that Renalls ignored

her remarks, gazing instead at the couple who interested him.

"It would be just like Norah," she said spitefully, "to marry at a moment's notice a man of whom one had never heard."

"She would if she wanted to," he agreed.

Chester had never anticipated a waltz so much as the first Norah gave him and never realized his anticipations so thoroughly. She danced perfectly and took him out of himself into a new world. When it was over, he asked, "Am I to have the other two?"

"You've passed your examination," she laughed. "You may."

When they were sitting out, she thought again of Osmund. "I'm very sorry that Mr. Osmund came," she said.

"It's all right," he assured her. "He is my friend. I am really grateful now that I've seen him."

"I'm so much relieved," she cried. "I was afraid it might be some disagreeable reminder."

"Dear old Billy could never be disagreeable," he said. "We were at school together and I'd trust him with my life. I look forward to being introduced to him again."

"I shall be happy to present you," she said.

She felt strangely light and care-free tonight. The man for whom she felt a warm friendship, that was not unmingled with admiration, was not in his proper sphere. Only she knew that under the white gloves were the honorable scars of toil. Never for a moment had she been in doubt as to the outcome of this experiment. In this magnificent room thronged with men and women bearing proud names in American society, Chester moved as by right and she found herself wondering what it was which brought him down. The weakness she most dreaded to learn of, was that evil of drink which is so marked in rich, idle young men today. She had seen too many bright futures wrecked by it.

There was a room leading from the great apartment, sacred to men and fitted with every sort of liquid refreshment and smoking material. He would presently drift in there, she supposed, as the other men did and have free access to what might possibly have been the cause of his downfall. It was a kind of test which she dreaded but yet wished him to undergo. There were even now among her guests men whom she had known as

nice-mannered, clean-minded boys who now never came to a dance innocent of spirituous breath. She did not like them but they were the men she best knew, and immoderate drinking was not solely a failing of the wealthy. It was a peculiarity of her nature that she liked to test herself, her friends and her possessions. If she bought a hunter, she put him at higher obstacles than she would encounter in the hunting field. Of her friends she expected the loyalty she gave them and her many disappointments in horses and men and women had not made her cynical or bitter. She had endowed Chester with certain attributes which he might or might not possess. He had not lied when he admitted he belonged to a rich set in a world where work was not known. His friendship with Osmund was proof of that. Osmund moved in a set that was not the one affected by the Godfreys. Whereas Mrs. Godfrey, widow of a bank president, knew for the most part those actively engaged in banking and allied pursuits, Osmund was of the Long Island hunting set whose money was made for them by long deceased relations. It was that set in America which does not encourage new members. It was but rarely Osmund had been in the Godfrey house.

When the waltz was finished, Chester looked at her programme. "You've only given me one dance for the supper," he complained. "It's always two at least. One shouldn't hurry even over an informal supper."

"You should have been earlier," she returned. "You were fifteen minutes late and I gave the dance to Mr. Fenwick."

"Which is Mr. Fenwick?" he asked.

She pointed out a vacuous looking youth who was talking to Osmund. "Excuse me for one moment," said Chester, leaving her. She watched his progress with interest. He bowed slightly to Fenwick and entered into animated converse with him. A look of indignation crossed Mr. Fenwick's face which was followed by one of uneasiness. Then it appeared he fell in with Chester's views and the two smiled pleasantly as they parted.

"What on earth was all' that about?" she demanded as he resumed his seat.

"That Mr. Fenwick, who has intelligence despite appearances, agrees with me that one cannot snatch a too-hasty refection and be happy. He was promised in your name the second extra instead."

"Your audacity astounds me!" she cried, laughing. "Why not the first extra?"

He took her programme and pencilled his initials against the first extra. "That is taken," he said.

"Do you know you're a very unscrupulous person, Mr. Vincent?" she exclaimed. "How do you know I wasn't living for that dance with him?"

"Let the second extra sustain you," he retorted.

"This is all very frivolous," she said. "I depended on you to store my mind with useful facts. You haven't yet offered an excuse for being late."

"I hope you won't insist," he said more gravely. "Believe me, it was absolutely unavoidable."

"Well, it doesn't really matter," she told him, "you came in time, after all, didn't you?"

"It does matter," he insisted. "It matters very much. To come to a dance that one has looked forward to, as one never did to another, late, is inexcusable in a man."

And yet he could not bring himself to tell her the true reason. As he was shaving in his ill lighted room just before dressing, he had knocked over the mirror and broken it. The landlady,

scenting loss and not sure as to the financial status of the pair, demanded to know the reason of the smash; and like all articles broken in boarding houses or furnished rooms, it was an heirloom and she would not have had it happen for fifty dollars. She insisted on immediate recompense. Peck was out, and with only a dollar between him and starvation, Chester was in despair. Joined by her husband, the landlady became virulent and derided the idea of a man dressed in evening clothes not being able to produce a five-dollar bill. He pacified her finally by a promise of payment on the morrow, but twenty minutes had been dissipated by this miserable affair. He designed his evening clothes for pawnbroking adventures. He felt he could not tell the girl at his side the miserable squalid truth.

"I'm not anxious to know," she declared. "I am sure it was something that was unexpected."

He looked at her gratefully. "It was," he said.

"Now," she cried gaily a minute later, "you must dance with my cousin, Alice Godfrey. I hope you'll like her. We get along famously; she never believes in what I do, and I never take any notice of what she says."

Mrs. Godfrey was disposed to like Chester. He listened most intently to her views on Ibsen — he had read the article, too, which had inspired them — and found no fault with her conception of modern art as set forth in the galleries and exhibitions. She felt she was firmly established in his mind as an intellectual and started, when this end was attained, to speak of less fatiguing matters.

“Do you know Charles Renalls?” she demanded.

“By name only,” he answered. “I was introduced to him but I doubt if that’s knowing him.”

“He’s dancing with the girl in black over there,” she said.

Chester glanced at him. “He seems to have a most offensive stare,” he said.

“It’s his way,” she returned. “Lots of men don’t like him.”

“I think I could easily be of their number,” said Chester. There could be no doubt but that the financier was regarding him unpleasantly.

“This dance was really arranged up for him,” the other declared. She was convinced that Norah would eventually marry him. “She’ll marry him sometime or another; he’s the sort of

man who always gets what he wants; those cold, patient men always do, I think."

She prattled on happily, not noticing that her partner had suddenly become very quiet.

"Are they actually engaged?" he asked, presently.

"Hardly that," she admitted, "one might call it an understanding rather."

"Do you welcome the prospect?" he demanded.

"It would be a splendid match," she said.

He raged inwardly at the unexpected tidings. From what he had heard Norah say and from what he knew of her circumstances, he supposed her to be indifferent to men. But here was the cousin with whom she lived admitting that the dance was arranged for this glowering brute who tried to stare him out of countenance. But despite this rush of bitterness, he did not in any way blame the girl. She had been kind to him when he needed kindness; she had been a friend when he was friendless, and that was all. He thought of the phrase with which he had described his evening clothes to Peck. They would indeed be funeral garments, marking the day of final banishment from the woman he loved. Suppose Renalls were to resolve himself into the mining man. His

enormous South American interests were well known and not inconceivably she might wish to obtain the help of her future husband for the man who was only a friend. If this proved to be true, then good-bye to mining, he thought. He knew certainly that Renalls hated him and would not help, and he swore that nothing should make him accept aid from her husband. He glanced at Renalls with intensified interest as the dancing brought them together, and Renalls saw, flaring back at him, the hatred which was never to be stilled.

"Who is that man, Vincent?" Renalls asked of Norah.

"A friend of mine," she answered, detecting the covert bitterness in his voice, "who never permits himself to ask impertinent questions."

"Is it impertinent to ask that?" he cried.

"Your tone was unpleasant," she said severely. "It implied a certain criticism of a fellow guest which I, as a hostess, don't like."

"I don't think you are behaving fairly," he objected. "It is a perfectly ordinary question that I've often asked you concerning other people. I know nearly all your friends and I'm naturally interested when Monmouth tells me you are in

the habit of meeting mysterious men, and then out of nowhere this Mr. Vincent pops up and takes half your dances."

"You'll admit he dances rather well," she said calmly.

"Good Heavens!" he cried. "Is that so much to boast of? Why, I can pick up three dancing masters in as many blocks who could give him cards and spades and a beating." She noticed for the first time this evening the ring of jealousy in his tones. She wondered, a little uneasily, if her manner had denoted any visible preference for the man whom he adjudged to be his rival. But she was angry with Renalls for his evident malice.

"And his skill," she continued, ignoring the interruption, "at catching tomcod and crabs is abnormal."

"You're making fun of me," the financier said, sulkily.

"Don't spoil a whole delightful evening by quarrelling, then," she urged. "Mr. Vincent, whom I have known for a long time, is a perfectly well behaved young man and known to friends of mine, too."

"Which ones?" he asked, quickly.

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She answered without thinking, "Mr. Osmund."

"I think you'd better guess again," he said. "I asked Mr. Osmund a few minutes ago and he said he didn't know him."

She was silent for a moment, angry at being betrayed into this admission.

"Mr. Osmund doesn't like you," she returned, "and your blunt rough way of cross-questioning isn't popular. He probably told you what he did in answer to some offensive question. You know, Charlie, your manners may mark you as a great man when your biography comes to be written, but while you are alive, they rather stamp you as a boor."

"I'm much obliged," he returned. She had given him material for thought. It was true that Osmund disliked him and would be ready to snub him if occasion offered. If, on the other hand, the girl was wrong, what was her reason for making the evasion? She was impatient, as he knew, of petty lies and could only have stooped to one for some very special motive. The idea that she was so friendly with the man Vincent was disturbing.

"I don't care a whole lot what Osmund thinks of me," he said at length. "He's one of those useless young men who couldn't earn five dollars

a week. If his grandfather hadn't bought a country house round about where Times Square now stands, Master William wouldn't be where he is today."

"But his grandfather did," she reminded him, "and mine did very much the same thing a few blocks north."

"I'm my own grandfather," he said grimly, "and as for respecting the memories of those old fools who founded the big families, I'd like to dig up their bones and have them thrown into the East River."

"The music is stopping," she said. "I'm very glad. In this vindictive mood, you're not an ideal partner."

A little later in the evening, Osmund, at a nod from Chester, followed him into the room set apart for masculine comfort. To their chagrin, Renalls was lighting a cigar. He had recovered his balance and nodded to Osmund with a show of amiability and then glanced more keenly at the man he knew as Vincent, who was mixing himself a whiskey and seltzer. Osmund, seeing private conversation impossible, sauntered out.

"You're a new friend of Miss Ellis?" Renalls asked with an appearance of friendly interest.

"Hardly that," was Vincent's unsatisfying rejoinder.

"I thought I knew all her old friends," said Renalls. "In fact I may say that I do know all her old friends."

"That must give you singular pleasure," returned Chester, lazily puffing at a delightful cigarette, the like of which he had not smoked for many moons. "But it must be boring, too, at times."

"Not a bit," Renalls declared, "Miss Ellis' friends are mine, too."

Chester blew a ring of smoke into the air. "Friendship seems to be a kind of hobby with you, then?" he inquired, blandly.

Renalls made him no answer. It was difficult to keep the dislike he felt from showing. "I suggest there are exceptions," Chester added.

"They don't count," Renalls snapped.

Chester turned to him the same pleasant countenance which he had shown. "Have you any particular purpose in starting this conversation with me?"

Renalls' face took a redder hue. "Politeness," he said with an effort, "demands a certain courtesy between fellow guests."

"I see," returned Chester, musing. "And this is your particular idea as to courtesy — this attempt to question me about the length of time I have known Miss Ellis! Oddly enough, I entertain absolutely different views of courtesy. You may have noticed that I asked no confidences of you."

"I did not intend to ask any questions which could offend," Renalls said stiffly, "but my friendship with Miss Ellis is so intimate that any such curiosity is pardonable."

"When I learn this from Miss Ellis," Chester said, "I shall be happy to draw up for your edification a list of all the places where I've had the good fortune to meet her."

Renalls felt he had met defeat. This imperturbable young man gave him no opportunities for learning what he was absolutely determined to know. There was an air of fashion about him not to be denied. His evening dress was in correct style and spoke of affluence. True, he wore no jewelry; but Renalls had found that a display of precious stones was not characteristic of the young men of the smart set. He decided upon an engaging air of candor.

"I'm afraid," he said, "that what seemed to

me only the pleasantries of ordinary conversation are offensive to you."

His manner disarmed the other. He feared that he had been rude to a man whom Norah regarded with warm feelings. Perhaps jealousy had betrayed him into exhibiting a side which would pain the girl, were she to learn of it.

"I'm sorry to have given you that idea," he returned politely. More than this admission he did not feel called upon to make. He glanced at the clock and rose to his feet. "I must find my partner," he said.

At the door a young man whom he did not remember to have seen previously stopped him. "Can you tell me if Charles F. Renalls is here?"

"In that room," said Chester, indicating the apartment he had just left.

The young man thanked him and then stared quickly at the other until he had passed from sight.

Renalls looked up to see yet another stranger. "Mr. Charles F. Renalls?" the new man asked.

"Well," said the financier, gruffly, "what about it?"

It was plain that the young man was a little nervous. "I have been sent," he commenced,

"by the *Daily Sphere* to find out whether the report as to the consolidation of the Agricultural Bank with the Manufacturers' Trust Company is true. There's a rumor that they've amalgamated and made you president."

"There is, is there?" sneered Renalls.

"I want the story," the young man admitted ingenuously.

"You aren't alone in your glory, then," Renalls snapped. "You newspaper men are a damned nuisance, anyway, and I've had ten of them this very day cooling their heels in my outer office waiting for the story you want. They are there still, for all I know or care."

"It is true, then?" the other asked, eagerly.

Renalls favored him with a long, insolent stare. He noted the ill fitting dinner coat, the incorrectly cut white waistcoat and the ready made white tie. Here, at least, was no invited guest. He was used to baiting the reporters, whom as a class he detested, and he could see to what category this man belonged. He was probably a brainy, eager young reporter, star of his local paper, in his native State, who had come to New York to make his name. He had been possibly one of the anxious ten waiting in the outer office

that morning and alone of them had learned of his destination and tracked him to it. Why the servants had admitted him would be learned later on. At last Renalls' black rage had found something upon which to vent itself.

"I know your sort," he sneered. "You're some cub reporter sent to make good where the others have failed. I suppose they promised you a job on the staff if you took back the story or what looked to be the genuine goods. If not, it's to be back to Pishtush in the Swamp for keeps, eh?"

"See here, Mr. Renalls," urged the young man, "I don't want to put myself in the wrong with you. I've just got to try to get my story some way but I'd rather have got it from you in your office than come in here like this."

Renalls looked at his clothes with a nasty smile.

"How much for the night?" he demanded.

The reporter colored and answered, not without a certain dignity, "I did hire them," he admitted, "and it was money I could ill afford, but I don't know that it's in good taste for a millionaire like you to remind me of it."

"Don't talk about good taste to me," Renalls

roared at him. "What sort of taste do you call it to sneak into a lady's house to a dance you weren't asked to, disguised as a gentleman, just to get a story for the *Daily Sneer*?"

"We've always treated you well, Mr. Renalls," the young man assured him with the strange loyalty of the average newspaper man to his journal. "I only want a few particulars about your amalgamation —"

Renalls interrupted him. "It's your amalgamation," he reminded him.

"It's a matter of vital public interest," the young man urged, "and with the public in this nervous, panicky state, may reassure thousands of investors."

Renalls shook his head. "Your city editor's drawn a blank with you," he observed. "I guess it's back to Pishtush in the Swamp for yours."

The journalist looked at him for a moment in silence. He saw, plainly, that he could get nothing from the surly financier. He realized that this much-deserved opportunity to make good and gain the staff was lost.

"Very well," he said, "I'll go."

"I think you'll need help," Renalls said with a grin. "If I say the word, there's a couple of

husky footmen who will boot you out on to the sidewalk in jig time."

"You wouldn't dare do that to a newspaper man," cried the other.

"You're not a newspaper man," said Renalls. "You're an impostor disguised as a gentleman who for all I know sneaked in here to go through the guests' pockets."

"I'm as good as anyone here," cried the other, now thoroughly aroused, "and a great deal better than most. Why, the very man who told me where you were, isn't what he seems."

He wondered at the financier's suddenly changed attitude. "Which one?" he demanded, eagerly.

"A tall, dark-haired young man, clean shaven, with aquiline features."

This was too indefinite for a practical man like the capitalist. He rose to his feet. "Point him out to me," he said.

Chester was dancing with Marjery Rosse and did not see the smile of contentment that irradiated the face of his rival.

The reporter found himself dragged back into the little room and offered a drink and a superb cigar. He was conscious of Renalls' powerful face gazing at him with a friendliness that was

amazing. "What on earth," muttered the young reporter to himself, "has happened?"

"You are probably mistaken," Renalls asserted.

"Never," declared the other, "it's part of my trade to remember faces. I last saw that man a few weeks ago in a police court charged with beating a big hotel out of a swell feed." In support of his story he gave the hotel's name and other details which Renalls stored mentally. He could see this interested the big man and he plunged into the story with what he felt sure was the best *Sun* manner. He was young, and it gave him, incidentally, the opportunity to air his profound knowledge of the world.

Renalls was not ungrateful for this lucky happening, "Now," he said, "get out that notebook and take down the names of the officers of the new corporation and some particulars about it."

When the reporter had gone, with all the honors of war, Renalls, happier than an hour ago he would have believed possible, strolled back into the ball room. He was in time to see Marjery Rosse introduce her partner to her fiancé. A minute after the two men made for the little room he had quitted.

Osmund wrung his friend's hand joyfully. "My dear old boy," he cried, "what in Heaven's name is the meaning of this mystery? We all thought you had disappeared for good."

"I have," said Chester. "This is positively my last resurrection."

"I won't believe it," Osmund ejaculated.

"But you must, Billy," Chester told him seriously. "I'm no longer in the world that was ours and is still yours. I lost all right to it, and after tonight, I get back into a world you wot not of."

"There's damned little comfort in hearing that!" Osmund rejoined.

"It's got to be," Chester said. He was depressed by the knowledge that Renalls was so much to the girl as to have the right to examine him on the length of their friendship. His store of cheerfulness was suddenly scattered. The future, which had always before offered him a fighting hope, seemed hardly of interest.

"Yes, it's got to be," he repeated wearily. "I played the fool all round, Billy. I had a fortune which I blew in after the approved fashion and I've got to suffer for it. Some day, if I've made reparation, I'll come back."

"You talk as though you'd been a criminal," Osmund objected. "What are you accusing yourself of? Have you wasted your wife's money on other women like Kerrison, or drunk your children's fortune like Reed? Did you ever cheat at cards or hit a man when he was down? None of us ever saw you do it."

Chester looked at him more cheerfully. "Billy," he said, "it's good to hear you say that, although you're kinder to me than I deserve. But all the same I acted the absolute ass and it was time I was stopped."

"Then we cleaned you out that day?" Osmund demanded.

Chester nodded. "You were the instruments of fate," he said. "I was swept out of existence, horse, foot and artillery."

"Dick," cried the other. "It makes me feel awfully bad to hear that. Why didn't you come to me and ask for anything you wanted? You've been mighty good to me, old man, and now it's a bit of a shock to find you didn't feel friendly enough to me to come and say you wanted money. Haven't I enough? Haven't I a damned sight too much?"

Chester put his hands on the other's shoulders.

"Billy," he said, "you mustn't feel like that. Others offered me money but I wouldn't take it. Money wouldn't help me."

"What are you doing now?" Osmund demanded.

"Working," Chester said, "and my prospects are splendid."

"You look prosperous enough," Osmund admitted. "But you're trained a bit on the fine side."

"I used to ride ten pounds too heavy," Chester remarked with conviction.

The preliminary tuning of instruments brought both men to their feet.

"When you want me or money or both," said Osmund, "you know where to find me. If you ask anyone else instead of me, you'll hurt me, Dick."

Chester gripped his hand, "I won't forget," he said.

Osmund had perfect faith in his friend's ability and never for a moment guessed to what straits he had come. Chester had never been associated in his mind with failure and he confidently expected him to return in trailing clouds of glory. He was still thinking of him when his partner,

Norah Ellis, started to speak of Vincent. "You used to know Mr. Vincent well, didn't you?" she asked.

"Yes," he admitted, at length.

"Why do you hesitate?" she demanded. "I'm his friend as well as you."

He looked relieved. This air of mystery taxed him somewhat. "He used to be my greatest friend," he said. "He is my greatest friend now," he corrected. "What do you know about him?"

"That he was a member of all the right clubs and lost his money. Was it drink?" she demanded suddenly.

Osmund grinned cheerily. "What put that idea into your head?" he asked. "Why, when we were at Yale, I got into a hard drinking set and he pulled me out of it almost against my will. He gave me an awful hammering once, for — well, to be exact, for shipping too much whiskey. He can hit like a horse kicking," he added, reflecting on ancient memories. "He isn't a total abstainer, not by a long shot, but he keeps himself in hand. Tell me what put that into your head?"

"So many men go that road," she sighed. "You remember Peter Harrington, who led all the cotillions, three years ago, and is now a re-

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mittance man in Brussels, and Elmer Crofts, who took poison a month ago. 'Wasn't it drink with them?'"

"I know, I know," he admitted uneasily, "I know we all drink far too much, but I'm going to cut it out when I marry and be a model husband. Look at Marjery," he cried as she passed with her partner. "Isn't she worth it?"

Norah smiled at his enthusiasm. "You're a lucky man," she said.

"Vincent," Osmund went at the word carefully, "always used to say that I was cut out for a happy married man. I used to jeer at him but he was right. By the way," he asked curiously, "where did you meet him?"

"It was most romantic," she cried brightly. "I was coming down the American Rhine in the launch when he caught a crab and lost the oar; his little boat was drifting out to the ocean when I towed him home."

Osmund looked doubtful. "Vincent caught a crab and lost an oar?" he exclaimed.

"There was another man in the boat," she admitted.

"That's the chap who lost the oar," Osmund declared.

“ Couldn’t we help him? ” she asked.

The man shook his head. “ Never. He’s as proud as Lucifer, Son of the Morning. I offered him anything I had but got turned down cold. But what makes you think he needs help? ” he added, suspiciously. “ You almost give me the impression that he’s down and out.”

She felt a thrill of satisfaction that not even to his old friend but only to her had he confided the hardships he had undergone.

“ He’ll win yet,” she said, and meant it.

“ I don’t like all this mystery,” he returned irritably. “ Here’s a man whose friends would back him to any extent, let’s say of a million, and he refuses to be helped. It isn’t natural.”

“ I think it’s rather fine,” she said softly. “ Being helped isn’t fighting, is it? ”

“ Perhaps not,” he grumbled. “ But what is the use of a man taking a heavy handicap voluntarily? It may prove his strength, but it wears him down in the long run.”

CHAPTER XIV

THE KINGDOM OF LOVE

“To do great things, a man must live as though he had never to die.” — *Vauvenargues*.

WHEN the dance was over, she watched him lead his fiancée proudly away. She sighed half enviously and was aware of Chester at her side.

“They’ll be happy,” she said, “and I’m afraid there are not many to bear them company.” She was so full of this that his silence passed unnoticed. But in the great dining room where supper was served on little separate tables, she became conscious of it. “You are very quiet,” she said.

“I was only giving you the opportunity to reflect,” he answered.

“I was reflecting about you,” she observed.

“I pray they were pleasant reflections,” he said, formally.

"Pleasanter evidently than yours," she cried. Then she noticed that he was watching her cousin and Charles Renalls.

"I wish you had told me about him," he said.

"What could I tell you that you don't know?" she demanded, puzzled.

"It's rather ungracious of me to mention it," he returned, "because after all you were kind enough to ask me here, but you half hinted in the Park that you were giving this dance for me."

"Well?" she said, "what of it?"

"Why, don't you see when Mrs. Godfrey told me it was all arranged for that man, I was disappointed."

"What else did she tell you?" the girl demanded.

"That you were going to marry him. That was all, I think."

"And you believed it?"

"Naturally. I agreed with her that it was a good match."

She looked him full in the face. "Why don't you congratulate me, then?"

"Do you care for empty phrases?"

"Can't you say it from your heart?"

"No," he said, "I can't. You should have a

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better man than he. I don't know a man who is worthy of you, but he isn't."

"You interest yourself very much in my affairs," she said. "Suppose I had asked you whether you were engaged, what would you have said? Wouldn't it have seemed unwarranted?"

"I should have told you," he said simply, "I was engaged once. She chose another life — the religious life — I saw her take the vows. She was a saint and God knows there's little enough of the saint about me."

"I don't think you have ever been bad," she said.

He shrugged his shoulders. "It seems to me I have always played the fool."

"I wish you wouldn't talk like that," she returned. "Surely you need not seize on this night, the night of the dance that was given for you, to make me miserable."

He looked at her eagerly. "Then it wasn't given for him?"

"It was given for you," she answered steadily. "What Alice meant by telling you that, and," she colored, "all that nonsense about my marrying him, I can't imagine."

"Then it wasn't true?" he cried.

"I shall never marry him," she said.

Her statement brought him immeasurable relief, although he knew it could not bring him nearer to those hopes which he could hardly dare to cherish. He had instantly detected in Renalls a coarseness of fibre which, however he might have concealed it from the girl, was patent to him. It could never be that he could think of her marriage without a pang but to see her sacrificed to a man of the Renalls type was unbearable.

But it was later on in the evening, when the dance was drawing to a close, that the full measure of his resolve not to see her again impressed itself upon him.

She was sitting out with him in a little sheltered alcove when she realized this air of depression. "I think you are wishing you hadn't come," she said.

"What makes you say that?" he asked.

"You are suddenly so silent."

"It isn't that I regret coming," he assured her.

"It is because, when New York lies far behind me, I shall be sorry."

"Are you going then?" she demanded. "Have you forgotten my friend who has mining interests?"

"No," he said, gratefully, "I haven't forgotten; but when he comes, the odds are, he will say like all the rest that I have no experience. New York is full of men who know all there is to know about subjects that I've hardly mastered the elements of. I don't stand a ghost of a chance with them."

He hardly understood the feeling of hopelessness that was upon him. The gorgeous scene, the rich dresses and all the thousand reminders of his old life seemed farcical when he thought of the existence that had been his lately and was likely to be his in the future.

"That isn't very friendly of you, is it?" she asked. "You make a sudden resolve to go away when New York surely offers the greatest opportunities to a man who wants to get on."

He looked at her almost hungrily. Never had she seemed so fair, so desirable and so far away. She was provocative of regrets and hopes unattainable and withal she seemed so alluring. But he was a penniless man and she had great possessions.

"I have thought it over very carefully," he answered. "I am convinced that I am right."

"Isn't friendship worth having then?"

"There has been nothing half so sweet to me as yours," he cried. "There has been nothing which helped me as much. My resolve wasn't made hastily."

"I am sorry," she said, simply, "I haven't many friends and I shall miss you."

He glanced at her in despair. Could he not let her know that he was renouncing this great gift for fear of betraying himself? The reproach in her voice drove all sense of caution from him.

"My dear," he said softly, "my dear, don't you see that I must go, I who have no right to think of you, love you so much that I dare not come here again. How could I come here and talk calmly and collected when my whole soul was crying out for you?"

She was leaning forward in the attitude he knew so well, her exquisite profile clear as a cameo in the soft crimson light of the shaded lamp. She did not look at him; instead, she seemed to be idly playing with her fan. "Then this is good-bye," she said dully.

He looked at her in despair, and the passion of his longing broke through the calculated prudence of his resolves and sent the blood racing through his veins. The mere touch of her shoulder against

his, the rare loveliness of her face and the thought of what this banishment would mean to him, drove him almost to madness. He clenched his hand and prayed for a calmer mood but such strength was not his. Instead, he put his arms about her and kissed her, all unresisting, a score of times.

“Good-bye, my dear,” he whispered, “and forgive me.”

It seemed to him that there was a wail in her voice. “Oh, why did you do it?” she cried.

“Because I couldn’t help myself,” he answered. “It was unpardonable, I know, but I shall always be glad I did. I’m not going to a happy life and if there is one thing that will make it livable, it will be this memory. No matter what you may say or think or what may happen to me, I shall always remember that I held you in my arms and your lips were pressed against mine and your heart beat next to my heart.”

Her silence oppressed him. He had risen to his feet and gazed down at her. “Shall I go?” he asked soberly.

“Do you suppose I shall ever forget either?” she said slowly. “It was true you had no right to do it, but what do you gain by going away?”

He looked at her in amazement. Instead of the

resentment which he had expected to find, there was only an undercurrent of sadness.

"Don't you want me to go away?" he stammered.

"I hardly understand myself," she said. "I thought we were friends, really friends. I treasured your friendship. I hardly know myself," she added. "I thought it was friendship on your part. I said to myself only an hour ago that friendship was a very beautiful thing."

"And I thought so, too, at first," he said, "but out of my friendship grew something more beautiful." He looked at her sadly. "What must you think of me for breaking it like this?"

"Sit down again," she told him, "I want to try to think what this means." He took the seat at her side. "You have made everything so difficult," she cried. "I liked you, I was sorry for you, I wanted to help you."

"You gave me new life," he said.

"When you said you must go I thought you had done right. I could have shaken hands with you and never known what had gone out of my life, if you had not taken me in your arms." She put a timid hand on his arm, "I can't let you go, now, my dear."

There are crises in life that can be met only with silence. He looked into her eyes, eyes dimmed as never before he had seen them, and knew certainly that the kingdom of love was before him. And in that divine moment he became conscious of the strength within him to conquer, which can only come to those who have their resting place in a woman's heart. He raised her hands with something of reverence to his lips.

She was the first to break the silence. Her whole being was flooded with a tender pride in her lover. There was no room left for suspicion or doubt. He loved her and was strong and everything must end happily. She was too happy to take thought of the morrow. "How nearly I missed you," she whispered.

"It was all mapped out by fate, Sweetheart," he cried, "we were never meant to miss one another." He drew her closer to him. "It was not accident; it was all some merciful design."

She sighed happily. "But suppose you had gone! I should have found out too late that I loved you and how could I have endured life?"

He grew more serious when she spoke of the future, but there was no longer the hopelessness which was his but a few minutes before. There

were giants in the way but he had something to fight for, someone to inspire him with a courage that was stronger than anything he had ever hoped to possess. She was anxiously watching him.

"Why do you still look sad?" she asked.

"I am thinking I can never love you enough," he answered. He took her hands in his. "Dear white, slender, strong little fingers," he cried, "I kiss each one of them. How tiny they are! And yet they dragged me out of the maelstrom."

She looked at him with glistening eyes. There is nothing so sweet to the woman who loves as to be told how she has helped.

"Did I do that?" she asked.

"Dear," he returned, "it was not only down the Hudson that I was drifting when you came to the rescue. Who taught you to be an enchantress?"

"I practise my spells for my lord alone," she smiled.

"And for none else?"

"I can't think of anyone else," she said. "I can only think of you and that you love me."

Renalls' voice in the distance brought her back to earth. She wished it had been to anyone

else that the next dance was given. She felt that his keen eyes must inevitably read the secret of her happiness. She raised her face to her lover's. "Good-bye for a little while."

Renalls, secure in the knowledge that he could damn Vincent by a mere recital of the police court incident, hugged his secret not decided whether to use it now or to wait until other episodes could be added to it. It put him in a good humor which was in marked contrast to that exhibited earlier in the evening. He looked at Norah critically.

"You never looked better," he exclaimed.

"I am happy," she said simply.

"Why," he asked, "is happiness something new then?"

"I love dancing," she returned, serenely, "this is a favorite waltz and for once you are not wrecking the careers of other couples."

And there were others who noticed her radiance. Osmund commented on it regretfully to his fiancée, "What she can see in a brute like Renalls beats me," he exclaimed.

The financier was far too shrewd and suspicious to be lulled into security by any such evasive answers. He had made it his business to find out that Norah had given Vincent many dances and

sat out with him this last one. And since she had never before shown so decided a preference for the company of any other man, it raised vague alarm in him. In so much as he could banish his inordinate ambition and think of anyone but himself, Norah absorbed more of his thoughts than any woman he had known. She was beautiful, she was an admirable hostess and the marriage would help him in many ways. No other man, he swore, should have her.

He had listened keenly to the reporter's story and hoped good would come of the inquiries he was determined to pursue. The young journalist had depicted Vincent as a professional swindler whose bluff had for once been called. But Renalls had gained no such impression of him. He was no common swindler. He must be, Renalls felt, one of the more prosperous adventurers who prey upon a credulous society even to the point of assuming titles and marrying heiresses. He was plainly after Norah's supposed fortune. No living being had so clear an idea of the state of the girl's finances as Renalls. By the exercise of his skill and through the financial journal which he owned, the financier was able to help or hinder her in the ambitious scheme of turning the Brazilian mines

into a great corporation. It would be easier now Cosway was out of the way and she had no reliable person behind her. No one knew better than he what a broken reed her partner Mendoza was.

Norah was far too much engrossed to notice his silence. She was existing only for the last dance with Chester. She was determined that on this night, this blessed night when the love which she had thought no part of her lot was vouchsafed her, no disturbing elements must enter. She answered Renalls' questions with a gentleness which surprised him. Her tongue did not always spare him.

But it seemed an eternity before she found herself alone with Richard. "If there had been another dance," she said, "I should have refused to dance it. I should have left my partner and tried to find you." She was surprised to find with what ease the reserve dropped from her. "I could hardly bear it."

"And I tried to talk sensibly to people," he declared, "but I'm sure I failed. Mrs. Godfrey said that since she first came out, no partner had ever kept looking at the clock as I did. She won't forgive me easily."

"I love you for it," she cried. She looked at

him eagerly. "Have you realized that I don't know anything at all about you? Don't tell me anything tonight if you don't want to; but you can't think how devoured by curiosity I am to learn everything there is to know about you. Were you a good little boy or a bad little boy? I wonder if you had any sisters and if they were nice to you. I'm jealous of every woman you ever spoke to. And think of it, I don't even know your Christian name! I can't always call you pretty names when other people are near, can I?"

"It's not a very pretty name," he laughed. "Whittington of pussy cat fame bore it, too."

"Richard," she said. "And so did the Cœur de Lion. I like it. Of course I shall call you Dick. There's something straightforward and manly about it and there are all sorts of nice little contractions of it that I can use when I feel like it. Do you know there's something rather fascinating in knowing so little of one another. In the only way that matters, we know each other perfectly, but in all the little things we have surprises in store." She looked at him with a smile. "Suppose you are disappointed in me, Richard."

"Suppose the sun never shines again!" he retorted.

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"I have many vices," she declared. "I get neuralgia and evil tempers."

"I wish I were as certain of being half as good as you," he said, "and I should be happier. And as for dreading what I may discover, have you forgotten my love for exploration?"

"We must go there again in the spring," she answered. "I can never think so kindly of any spot on earth as that quaint old place." She looked at him with mock reproach. "Do you know our very acquaintance began in deception? Like Douglas Gordon in the song, you 'threw away your oar, your sail, your rudder,' and shouted for help. Have I trusted you too much?"

It was truer than she knew that their first meeting had begun with deception. It seemed years ago to Chester since that night when he crouched behind the Louis Seize screen and first saw her. There was no fear in his mind that when the time came for an explanation she would blame him. How or when circumstances would permit him to tell her were matters for future consideration—something as yet on the knees of the gods.

Her love had swept some of his old self-sufficiency away. "I hope you will never think that," he said. "I want all your trust and love, darling."

"You know it is all yours," she cried. "I keep back nothing."

"I sha'n't much longer," he said; he knew that there must be between them the absolute faith born of perfect knowledge.

She stroked his hair with a caressing gesture. "My poor boy," she said, "you've had hard times and you've been very plucky and I am content to begin to know you from tonight."

"That's generous of you," he cried, "that's just what I should have expected." He paused for a moment. "Dear, there are many things to be done before I can tell you but you must know me from the beginning."

"When you like," she said, looking at him with eyes of affection. "Dick, did I ever tell you I thought you were handsome? I do think it. There's the tiniest little wave in your hair that is charming and just at the temples there are some hairs hiding underneath the others as though they were ashamed of being gray. Are you very old, my Richard?"

"Very," he sighed. "One and thirty summers have passed me by."

"A whole quarter of a century has rolled by me," she returned. "I wish we were both

younger; there would be more good years before us. I can't bear to think we may be cheated of even a moment."

"We sha'n't be," he exclaimed with conviction.

"Then you mustn't leave New York," she insisted.

"I was only going to escape from you," he told her. "I was afraid of my enchantress and of myself and everything else."

"It's a promise then?" she asked.

"It's a vow," he returned.

"Life is very kind," she sighed happily. "I think I have always been rather happy but now I feel that, like all the stories I loved as a small child, we shall end up happily and live for ever afterwards." She turned to him a moment later, her face graver than he had seen it.

"Did it ever occur to you," she demanded, "that I might have a past?"

"I decline to hear about it," he returned placidly. There was no doubt in his mind as to what she was thinking.

"But I'm serious," she persisted. "It was one of the reasons that made me sorry when I found I had grown to like you. I had, you know," she smiled, "even before you kissed me, but I wouldn't

admit it till now. Oh, Dick, my dear, I'm afraid you'll be angry. You look so frightfully stern sometimes that I'm terrified to think you may be angry."

"Is it trusting me fully when you assume I shall be angry?" he asked, tenderly.

"But suppose it turns out to be something very bad?"

"You never did anything bad," he declared with conviction, "and I wouldn't believe you if you had. And if you told me still that it was bad I should know that, whatever it was, there were circumstances which could explain everything."

"It's very comforting to hear you talk that way," she said, gratefully. "But I'm not going to confess now. I hope I've never met you before," she continued, with sudden irrelevance.

"Why?" he asked.

"It would seem a sort of disloyalty to forget you," she said.

"But you couldn't be supposed to remember any casual partner at a ball," he objected, "even if we had met at one, which we certainly have not."

"Perhaps men don't think of these things as women do," she told him; "you see I've been

expecting you for years and years. I used to say I should never marry and that I liked women's society better than men's, but it all meant, my wise Richard, that you hadn't come and kissed me. So can't you see how angry I should feel with myself if I thought I had met you and not known you? "

He breathed more easily when she did not pursue the subject to greater lengths. When he had made good he would tell her how he had met her and whose ring she wore but the time was not yet come. The innate Chester pride had not been tamed by poverty and manual toil. If he were to confess that she was in reality his wife, how could he bear to leave her and settle down into the work through which alone he hoped to win her? There was never a thought in his mind about giving her up and his determination to make a good fight was due to the desire to show himself worthy of her. And it was a fine ambition and the spirit of his long dead ancestor, the knightly Sir Richard, lived in him and lighted up his face. The girl by his side felt a great pride in him. Her voice was very tender when she asked, "What are you thinking of? "

"Of you," he said, "and the day when you will

be mine absolutely and I can look back on one or two little years and offer them to you as gifts."

Willingly would she have dowered him with all that was hers and raised him from the hard lot in which she guessed him to be placed, but she recognized in him the pride that would not accept.

"There are many things I must talk to you about tomorrow," she said, "things that one can't talk of now."

"When may I come?" he asked eagerly.

"Tomorrow at half-past three."

The preliminary bars of music brought her to her feet. "How I grudge you those dances with other women," she sighed.

"Shall I like to see other men with you?" he asked.

"I hope not," she said. "I want you to be impatient of everything that keeps us apart. Say good-bye to me now, Dick. At the end I shall only be able to give you a smile and a hand-shake." She lifted her face to his. He strained her to him, and she seemed slight and frail as a child. A sense of infinite tenderness overwhelmed him. His kingdom of love was a kingdom of certainty.

CHAPTER XV

LOUIS SEIZE AGAIN

“It’s a deep mystery — the way the heart of man turns to one woman out of all the rest he’s seen in the world, and makes it easier for him to work seven years for her, like Jacob did for Rachael, sooner than have any other woman for the asking.” — *George Eliot.*

NOTHING could have made more plain to Chester the present social difference between him and Norah, or the need to gather all his energies about him in the fight, than the contrast between the gorgeous rooms he had left and the bare chamber which he shared with Peck.

He found it so close that he flung open the window to let in the cool air of early morning. Peck had shut it tight for the reason that when a man is forced to eat but sparsely, warmth at night is more comforting than healthful ventilation. Chester’s action awakened him and he sat up yawning in bed.

“Had a good time?” he asked sleepily.

“Good is not the right word,” his friend de-

clared. "There is no word known which could describe it. I'm alive again. Yesterday at this time I was as those who go down to the pit; now I am like twenty giants."

Peck looked at him and shrugged his shoulders. "Enigmas," he said. "I never guess them."

Chester sat at the foot of his bed. "Not enigmas," he retorted, "miracles."

Peck shivered. "Pneumonia is coming through the open window, meanwhile, double pneumonia. Shut it and talk ordinary common sense."

"I'm full of it," Chester returned gaily. "My dear man, I forgive everybody. I feel like a character in Dickens at the approach of Christmas."

"I wish the landlady did," Peck exclaimed. "You've been falling foul of her, it seems."

"There's another matter for discussion," Chester said, his good humor unabated. "I broke a mirror. What usually happens after that? Seven years of ill luck. Peck, that is a vain and idle superstition, an elaborate, proverbial lie. I am proof of it. Tonight has been the most splendid of all my life."

"Cards?" demanded the other.

Chester looked at him with scorn. "Your soul cleaves to the dust," he said,

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"I don't see that at all," Peck cried. "In our present circumstances good luck can only take the form of money. If you haven't made money, justly or unjustly, I don't want to hear about it."

"I wasn't going to tell you," Chester said. "It was something that had to do solely with me. As to making money, I have the strength to do it."

"Strength!" sneered Peck, "that's nothing. I had all that a man wanted, but one meal a day and disappointments soon toned that down. Luck is what I'm looking for. Some people call it opportunity and some, Providence, and the good folks call it answers to prayer, but it's just blind, fickle luck."

"I'm afraid you don't like being roused from your beauty sleep."

"It was the landlady," said Peck, "she upset me. I was reading a copy of Catullus that I bought in the five cent box at a second-hand book store when she burst in and gave me not only the private opinion of her husband and herself concerning you but the individual opinion of every other roomer in the house. By reason of your glad rags, you are credited with being a bunco-steerer temporarily out of a job."

Chester was suddenly oppressed with the sordidness of his surroundings. A fierce longing to break away from them took hold of him. He took off his coat and hung it up.

"My glad rags are going to pay for the mirror," he said, quietly.

"We needn't pay her the five she asks," Peck advised, "and it's a pity to sell those togs if you can keep them. What about those cuff buttons? Are they real?"

Chester looked at them closely. "I expect they are," he answered. "I found them in the bottom of my trunk. I think I bought them at Tiffany's."

"There's the money right here," Peck declared after examining them. "We are going to have a lucky streak from now on. If you haven't got news with money in it, I have. I've got a job as a copy-holder in a big printing plant. Eight dollars a week, my boy, and the chance to get a proof-reader's job later on. I've been reading up the subject and it seems perfectly simple to a man with any decent education. It's a non-union shop or I shouldn't get a chance. I start at eight on Monday."

And Peck, who graduated *artium baccalaureus*

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with honors, chuckled at the prospect of replacing a lad with a common school education. There is a certain mordant humor about the competition called life.

“Good man,” said Chester, “that’s splendid. Times are going to change despite the landlady’s predictions and the mirror that was used on the *Mayflower*.”

“I wonder,” said Peck, “if there’s any chance of my getting any editorial work?” It had long been his aim to win such a position but his lack of experience had always been his undoing.

“Very probable,” Chester returned. He was as ignorant as his friend of these things. They neither of them knew that the proof-reader is typographically considered neither fowl, flesh nor good red herring, and is stuck in a small smelly den amid the rattle of presses and expected, in such surroundings, to catch every mistake and wage unequal warfare between careless linotype operators and foremen who want to cut down expenses. Peck fell asleep dreaming of editorial chairs but the other man was too overwrought to rest. He was impatient for the daylight so that he might go out and conquer where before he had failed. No longer alone and bound on a journey

that promised no successful issue, he now saw a way opening before him, not without difficulties, but lightened by that faith and hope of the woman he loved.

He had never been so profoundly nervous as when, at the time appointed, he was shown into a reception room of the Godfrey house. Might she not, he feared, now that the light and glamor of the ball room was gone, view things differently and repent? He reproached himself for these thoughts savoring of treachery, but the day was gray and gloomy and the full extent of her sacrifice was horribly apparent. His bare room, and this great apartment! He was too nervous to sit still; he wandered aimlessly about the room pausing before bronzes and pictures without seeing them. One photograph of Norah showed her much the same as the miniature he had taken from the Beau Sejour. He was looking at it intently when the door opened and the original came in. For a moment she stood still and looked at him. And he read in her eyes the denial of his doubts and fears and stretched out his arms to her.

"I was almost afraid to come in," she confessed. "I stood outside and heard my heart beating."

"Did you feel it, too?" he cried. "I could hardly bear to think about it. It seemed something so wonderful that it frightened me. Darling, do you know you are the most beautiful girl in all this dear old world? I've never dared to look at you as I may now. If I had, you would have guessed that I loved you."

"Do you think I should have minded it?" she asked almost shyly. "Dick, I think I must have loved you long before I guessed it."

Presently she rose. "I want you to come to my drawing room," she said. "This is Mrs. Godfrey's; it's larger but you'll like mine better."

It was situated on the next floor and he knew, before he entered, that it would be furnished in the period of the sixteenth Louis.

"What do you think of it?" she asked.

"It is a beautiful room," he said. "I think I should have chosen such a one for you." His eye rested on the screen in the corner through whose hinge's chink he had first seen her, and her eye following his, sent a color to her cheeks and made her more than ever determined to tell him what was in her mind.

"I told you last night," she began, "that I had something to confess."

"I am not anxious to hear it," he returned lightly. "I do not want to hear."

"But you must," she protested. "It may make you hate me. I'm very serious."

He found himself in an unpleasant predicament. To have to listen to a story he already knew so well savored too much of hypocrisy to suit him; but there was, obviously, nothing else to do. He listened in silence. On the nervous fingers that played with the pendent chain about her neck he saw no Chester ring. When she had finished, she looked at him anxiously. It was an awkward moment.

"What does it matter?" he said. "You have only got to divorce him and all will be well. Isn't it rather strange that you have delayed so long?"

"I am forced to it," she said. "On that awful night I was so beside myself with nervousness and disgust that I didn't even catch the man's name. My lawyer attended to all that."

"Why didn't he, then?" Chester demanded.

"He died within a week and he hadn't time to start the thing. He had no children and a nephew travelling in Europe is the heir. He won't be back till May and won't consent to any documents being touched until he returns. You see

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Mr. Cosway had practically retired from law; he only looked after my affairs out of kindness for me. All my private papers are locked up and sealed and I can't get at them."

"Can't you get an order from the courts allowing your present lawyer to get at them?"

"I dare not run the risk of publicity," she said. "Nobody has yet found out and I should have the whole country publishing pictures of me and special stories. I could never live down the disgrace, for it was disgraceful to be forced into marriage like that."

"Then you must wait until May," he said cheerfully. "You don't remember where — er — where the man lived?" he asked later.

"I remember nothing," she said. "After he had gone I fainted from the excitement and was ill for a week. You see in cases like that, papers have to be served and I can't entrust a lawyer to serve them on a nameless man at an unknown address." She looked at him rather timidly. "Don't you despise me?" she asked, "don't you think it was unwomanly and horrid of me?"

"I didn't know what room there was in my soul for love and admiration till now," he said

tenderly. "Poor little girl, you've had your troubles."

"But nothing like yours," she cried. "But Dick, my dear, they're all over."

"And if mine are not," he said, "I can bear them now all right."

"Dick," she returned, "I'm afraid you are a very obstinate person. You've got one of those horribly resolute jaws and you look very stern at times. I'm afraid even that you are so obstinate that you won't let the people who love you, help you. Your interests are my interests now and mine must be yours."

"They are," he declared.

"Then will you let me help you? I don't see how, for the moment, but I can't go on living, if I have to think of you suffering."

"Dearest, you won't," he said gently. "I am going to get along. I feel it in my bones and you'll be much gladder if I do it alone. Really and truly I'm not afraid of hard work. Does this sound ungracious and as though I were too proud to accept anything from the woman who has given me her love?" He looked at her anxiously. "Dearest, it isn't that at all. It is only that I feel I must work out my own salvation."

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"I think I love you all the more for it," she said slowly, "but I shall suffer. How can I be happy if I think you may be digging tunnels or something of that sort?"

"I am hitched to a star," he laughed. "Never think of me as working underground like a mole."

"When are we to see one another?" she demanded. "I can't lose you directly I've got you."

"On Sundays," he said. "You see the week may not be my own."

"Every minute of Sunday is yours," she declared. She looked at him very tenderly. "Dick, my dear, if you get ill and you shouldn't get on as you want to and you lose heart and hope and health and in the end I lose you through it, what shall I do? Is my heart to break because of your pride?"

He kissed the tears from her eyes. "My Sweet," he whispered, "that can't be the ending. If it should be, I shall come to you and confess I have failed, but I want to come to you as a victor. Wouldn't you rather I came as one who had conquered?"

She shook her head. "Don't you understand that when a woman loves a man, she can love the man who lost as much as the man who won?"

Sometimes I think she loves him more. You would be my hero, Dick, whether the world called you so or not. I think women are tenderer to defeat than men. The prodigal son said he would go and ask his father for forgiveness. He knew his mother would forgive him. You talk sometimes as though you had committed dreadful sins. Dick, I forgive you for all you have ever done so long as you love me."

There was something very splendid to him in the complete love and trust she showed. He felt abashed by it and very humble.

"What can I ever do to repay you?" he said.

"You said last night you would bring me one or two years as gifts. Dick, bring them quickly if you love me."

Presently she spoke of her affairs and the possibility that Renalls, when once he had learned of her engagement, might turn from a friend to an avowed enemy.

"Let him," cried Chester. "I can't bear the idea of your having that man anywhere near you. What is his enmity to us?"

"My dear boy," she laughed, "my splendid, reckless Dick, don't you understand his power? He might wreck the North Brazil Goldfields just

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as they are going to be put on the open market. His influence is tremendous."

"I detest him," Richard avowed frankly, "and he hates me."

"I hope you won't quarrel till the thing is settled," she said. She looked at the clock. "I promised Alice I would take you down to her room for tea. You must be very nice to her. You know you were rather silent last night and she thinks you are very dull and I can't have anybody thinking my Richard is dull."

"She would keep talking and prevent me from thinking about you," he protested. "I just wanted to be let alone."

"But you can't expect a woman to want a silent partner," the girl said. "I want you to make amends, remember."

But he was not allowed much time to talk with her. After she had given him a cup of tea, she announced that Mr. Renalls was coming at five o'clock. He had talked with her over the telephone.

"He is a great friend of Norah's," Mrs. Godfrey said pointedly. "I sometimes wonder what she would do without him."

"He is to be envied," Chester said placidly.

It was not in Alice Godfrey's power to make him jealous.

"I would much rather you two didn't meet," Norah whispered to him presently. She blushed. "I don't want him to know about it yet. Do you mind? It will be so uncomfortable to have two sulky men glaring at one another."

"Am I banished?" he asked dismally.

"There is Sunday," she reminded him. "If it is fine, shall we go to Undercliff? If it's dull you must lunch here with me. Alice is going away on Saturday and we shall not be bothered with anyone. Will you come here for me on Sunday at twelve, rain or shine?"

"I should like anyone to try to keep me away," he said.

When he had bidden Mrs. Godfrey good-bye, Norah walked to the head of the great stairway and there they made their adieux.

"You must think a great deal of Mr. Vincent to walk to the stairway with him," Mrs. Godfrey said sharply. She was piqued at the lack of attention she considered Chester paid her.

"I do," Norah returned carelessly.

"I don't know what Charlie Renalls will say to it," the elder woman remarked.

"My dear Alice," said Norah quietly, "Let us understand one another. I care nothing whatsoever for Mr. Renalls' opinion on the matter."

"You needn't be unpleasant about it," protested the other.

Norah laughed gently. "I'm not going to be argumentative today. It's one of my lucky days and it mustn't be spoiled. Only, Alice, please remember that a man's asking me to marry him gives him no right to dictate to me. Charlie is getting rather censorious of late and I don't care for that sort of thing."

CHAPTER XVI

THE BUSINESS MAN

"I have often thought upon death, and I find it the least of all evils. All that which is past is as a dream; and he that hopes or depends upon time coming, dreams waking." — *Bacon*.

IT was getting very cold as Chester passed down the avenue, but since he had taken his things, or some of them, from pawn he was warmly clad and he walked down to the Hungarian Restaurant on Second Avenue living over again the golden memories of the day.

Peck was not at the restaurant, and when Chester waited and still he had not come, he went to the Astor Library and to the Cooper Union and was again unsuccessful. It had been his intention to tell his friend something of the good fortune which was now his and he waited till seven, the dinner hour, and then had his meal alone. On returning to his room it was evident that Peck had not been in. The landlady had seen nothing of him. In the morning, when he had not returned and there was no communica-

tion from him, Chester began to feel a vague alarm. At the precinct police station, he was bidden to search the hospitals. The sergeant made a casual note on the blotter. "We have heard nothing," he said.

At the first three hospitals there was no sign of Peck. At last he came to the grim Bellevue. He was told that a man answering his description had been brought in dying yesterday afternoon. He had been run over by a trolley car when, in trying to board it, he had slipped on the icy pavement. Chester was directed to the room where three bodies lay waiting — a grim, cold chamber smelling horribly of disinfectants.

One was an old man with a grizzled beard, an alien member of another race who had come from far Lithuania to the golden city which spelled freedom and wealth to him; and he had died in the streets of the golden city of his dreams, of starvation. The second body was that of a poor hollow-chested tailor whom fate had compelled to work in a sweat shop where he caught tuberculosis and died of it. It was a fate which would come to his friends who were still working there and reading the ironic literature of a great crusade which directed sufferers to spend many hours

in the open air, to eat good food and drink many pints of milk.

On the third table, his white face upturned to the skylight and the eager boyish look not banished by the last mystery, was Chester's friend.

The attendant, to whom death was no longer a grim spectacle but a common fact to talk of and even to jest about, turned to the man who stood bareheaded by the table. "Is this your friend?" he inquired. For a moment Chester could not speak. There were tears in his eyes and he gulped back a sob. "He was my friend," he said simply.

Before he left the building, he asked of the man what became of bodies such as Peck's whose relatives were unknown.

"The unclaimed dead go to the Potter's Field," he was informed.

Directed by this attendant to the office, he spoke to a member of the clerical staff. "I wish to make myself responsible for the funeral of my friend," he said. "May I ask you to see that precautions are taken to that effect?"

"Sure," said the man easily, "we like to be relieved from it. Murphy, on the corner, is a good undertaker." He made the necessary order and demanded to know when the interment would

take place. "The quicker the better," he suggested. "It will be all right," he assured Chester comfortingly, "it's only the babies that get changed."

In his desolate room Chester examined his friend's belongings. There were no letters which could give indications as to relatives or close friends. There were no things of value. A few books, mostly of poetry, were there, Horace, Theocritus, Vergil, Alfred de Musset, Keats, Shelley and Stevenson. And open was the five-cent Catullus of which the dead man had made some metrical translations. Out of the mass of filth, he had picked that wonderful Ode to Lesbia, founded on some idea of Moschas, centuries earlier, than which Catullus wrote nothing more beautiful. Was it some dim prophetic instinct, Chester wondered, which made his friend choose the four lines of it commencing, "*soles occidere et redire possunt*," to translate? Peck had thus rendered the lines:

"With the fled day a new one's born;
When dies our little light,
There comes that long, still night
To sleep, that knows no morn."

There was something inexpressibly sad in the pagan hopelessness of the last line. Dead in the

moment which offered him work, and all unconscious of the secret his friend was hoarding or the effect that it might have on his future, poor, loyal, enthusiastic Everard Peck came to his death.

It was with a heavy heart that Chester sat down to write. And there was forced upon him the feeling that fate must have some motive deeper than blind chance which compelled him to write of death in the first letter to his Norah. "My Dearest," he wrote, "a great grief has befallen me in the death by accident of the true friend of whom I spoke to you. He lies now in the Morgue awaiting, unless I can avert it, burial with the nameless dead. The funeral will cost rather less than a hundred dollars and there is no one whom I can ask but you. My heart is very sad and I shall want, more than you can think, your dear comfort on Sunday. I am sending this by a messenger whom I can trust. He will wait for your answer. R. V."

There was a fifteen-year-old son of the landlady who had taken a great liking to the old Yale athlete and he went willingly upon the errand. He came back speedily with accounts of a great mansion where footmen guarded the portal and there was a luxury incredible.

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There were two fifty-dollar bills in the envelope and a hastily scribbled note. "Darling," it ran, "I am very proud that you asked me, but I am very sad for you. All my love and all I have is yours. Norah."

It was the generous answer he had expected and lifted in a measure some of the load from his heart, although there was still the disquieting association of death being intertwined with this beginning of a new life. But the immediate result was an overpowering relief that the body of the man he loved was not to lie in an unnumbered grave but in a brighter spot. He was buried in a quiet corner of Kensico Cemetery and there his friend took leave of him whose short life had been blameless but unfortunate.

Sunday brought with it rain and the river outing was not to be thought of. He lunched alone with Norah and her sympathy in his loss revealed a very tender side of the woman who loved him. He was distressed to find her looking pale and almost ill.

"Don't worry," she cried, reassuring him. "I get dreadful colds at the beginning of the cold weather and only get rid of them by going away for a few weeks at a time."

His face fell. "Going away for a few weeks!" he repeated.

"I shall hate it," she said emphatically, "but if I'm ordered to Jamaica as usual, I shall have to rush away."

He looked very serious. "Is it anything wrong with your lungs?"

"Not a bit," she said, "I'm very strong and can play tennis all day long and outwalk most men, but I'm susceptible to colds at this time of the year and I'm sensible enough to take care of myself. Don't you want me to be careful? I have you to think of now, Dick."

"Oh, my dear," he cried, "if anything happened to you, I should die. Of course you must go. I shall write to you every day."

"I shan't go without letting you know," she exclaimed. "Perhaps by next Sunday I shall be better and the weather finer."

"It's winter now," he returned. "Undercliff must wait." He looked at her anxiously. "You look so frail," he said tenderly. "In the summer you were as brown as a berry and now you look so white."

"I shall be well again after three days in the Caribbean," she assured him, "and I shall come

back tuned up for all the work and fun of the winter. 'There'll be other dances,' she reminded him, "and you will have to look after me. Up to now I have always boasted of my independence. After all, it's rather nice to have a man to wait on one and I can even see something nice in waiting on a man. That is, of course," she added, "if he is the one man of them all. If you're not very careful, Dick, I shall spoil you abominably."

When he left her, after a day which banished many months of loneliness, he was inspired by the hope that the new week was to bring him luck.

His first errand on Monday was to acquaint the printing firm of which Peck had spoken that death had robbed them of a copy-holder. Ignorant of the exact position of the proof-reader or copy-holder in such an establishment, he bent his steps to the manager's office instead of to the composing room. He stated the fact briefly and then asked if he could try to fill the position.

The manager looked at him in astonishment. Chester was still dressed well and his bearing and manner was not like those who seek lowly positions. "It wouldn't suit you at all," said the manager. "To begin with, there's no money in

it and it leads to nothing." He shook his head decidedly. "You are out of a position, then?"

"I'm looking for one," Chester returned.

The manager thought for a moment. "Do you know anything about printing?"

"Not a thing," said the other.

"A superficial knowledge is easily picked up," the manager declared. "A day or so spent nosing around and asking questions will give you all the knowledge required to start. Weight of paper, layouts, type and the rest come gradually and there is always the estimating man to help."

"In what?" Chester demanded, puzzled.

"Why, I'll tell you. One of our city salesmen has just 'phoned to say he has got a new job and won't be around here again. He was fairly successful and knew next to nothing about it. I'll put you on in his place if you like. What do you say?" The manager was a man who "hired men on their faces" and Chester impressed him as a man who could readily obtain an interview with a client and he had need of such an one.

"What is there in it?" the younger man demanded. He had learned by this time that eagerness to obtain a position often militated against success.

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"Ten per cent. commission," said the manager. "This is a big house with a big name and we don't want the sort of loafers who get a drawing account and live on it. What's it to be?"

"Yes," said Chester, "but where am I to learn about paper and type and the rest of it?"

"Right here," the manager asserted, touching a buzzer.

"Now," he said, "you may think I'm an easy mark because I hire you right off, but never think that for a moment. The last man I hired came to me with the best references you ever saw and did nothing, and a man who'd been a school teacher in Maine came here and made good. We don't stand to lose on you, but if you don't make good, you lose. See?"

Chester smiled. "You make it perfectly plain."

A man entered into whose charge Chester was given. Under his tutelage he learned much and went to his frugal luncheon with little samples of paper in little books. To his room he took a huge book of types and a work on electros. It was a new phase of industry for him but he was quick and had been told what rewards lay in store for the successful salesman who was in no way related to the intruding peddler of unwanted

books. He wandered into the composing rooms and learned what a linotype machine was and many of the mysteries of typography were made plain to him. He sat at the estimator's desk; and watched intricate layouts of booklets, catalogues and folders worked cleverly to completion in the art department. He became gradually aware that his new firm stood high and it was a lucky chance that brought him there. With the other salesmen he made acquaintance and found them for the most part decent fellows ready to impart what they knew.

On Thursday, after three full days, he asked permission to try his luck. The manager, who was a kindly man and interested in the new salesman, furnished him with some good leads. "There's the new Hotel Beau Site on the Plaza," he suggested. "Their printing will be worth a fortune to the man who gets it. We've never done anything for them although I've been to see them myself, but there's no reason why you shouldn't try and get a part of it." He gave Chester the name and address of the general manager, who bought all supplies and looked after the publicity.

To this office Chester straightway betook himself. A young lady, exhibiting the latest style

of coiffure, came to him and demanded his business. She looked doubtful when she heard that he wished to see her employer. She pointed out half a dozen men who were waiting their turn. "And there's someone with him now," she said.

"What shall I do?" he asked with a smile.

Now it happened that the maiden was romantic and a reader of novels. He presented the appearance of a hero in whose exploits she was for the moment much interested, a tall, dark hero with clean-cut features and a fascinating way. Also, this discerning damsel decided that he was "class." She looked at the waiting six with distaste. They were none of them six feet high, most of them looked commonplace and not one had vouchsafed her a fascinating smile.

"You go and sit on that chair over there," she said, "by the boss's door, and when the man in there comes out, you go in. Otherwise you might have to wait three hours or more."

The waiting six watched his progress with intense indignation. One of them essayed to wax sarcastic with the lady in charge but was signally defeated. Chester, oblivious of this, took the indicated seat. It was the other side of a glass partition which did not go up to the ceiling.

He could plainly hear what was going on. The talk of the two men he could not see was of the printing of a booklet which was to be as far superior to other hotel booklets as the Beau Site was above all other famous hostelryes. Then followed minute directions as to photographs and the general make-up of the book. The manager was used to buying printing and knew what he wanted. The other man, presumably a salesman of a rival house, was copying down in his notebook the particulars. In that moment Chester became a business man; in the neat notebook he had, he copied the whole of the highly technical details down.

"And now," said the manager, "when can I have the estimate? That book is needed in a mighty hurry."

"Let's see," Chester heard the other man reply. "Today is Thursday. I'll let you have it by the first mail tomorrow, Friday."

The hotel man grunted, "Can't I have it tonight?"

"I'm afraid not," said the salesman. "It's a big job and our estimator is working overtime."

"Funny you can't work it out yourself," complained the other. "I wanted to take that esti-

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mate and prices down to my home over Sunday and talk about it."

Chester waited for no more. He sauntered back to the gracious maiden.

"I think I'll call back later," he said. "Shall I find him in at half-past two?"

"I'll make an appointment," she smiled, "What is the name?" She wrote it down. "Mr. Baumgarten will see you at that hour," she said.

As fast as he could travel, Chester returned to the office and found the estimating man hard at work. He declined to break off from what he was doing and Chester was in despair. Against his inclination he complained to the manager, whose eyes glistened when he heard of Chester's scheme. He strode angrily toward the estimator. "Sackett," he cried, "drop what you're doing and attend to Mr. Vincent's business and do it quick."

Without a word the man took the particulars from Chester, the number of pictures, the size of the type, the weight of the stock, number of words and all the rest. He worked the thing into prices for from five to a hundred thousand, and put it so plainly that the other could make no mistake.

At half-past two he was shown into Baumgar-

ten's office. "I'm afraid you're too late," the hotel man said, "I've as good as given it to one of your rivals."

"Let me give you an estimate," Chester said. "You can't beat our work but our prices are high."

"Price has nothing to do with it," Baumgarten cried. "It's a high class proposition and I want the best work and I want it at once. I'm to have their estimate tomorrow, first mail, and I shall probably take it."

"All right," said Chester, rising. "I could have given you an estimate right away and saved time."

"You could?" cried the other.

Chester resumed his seat. "Let's hear the specifications," he said.

He copied it once again and added and subtracted innocuous figures for the space of two minutes. Baumgarten watched him admiringly. Chester sprang the figures on him suddenly — Sackett's figures.

"When should I get delivery?"

Chester was ready for him. The manager had vowed if the order were to be brought in to rush the job through on record time. His reply pleased Baumgarten exceedingly. Chester's firm stood

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deservedly high and the rival firm was notoriously slow in delivery.

"Very well," he said suddenly, "you get the order."

Chester was stunned. It was precisely as though Mr. Baumgarten had presented him with the sum of fifteen hundred dollars. This represented the commission he had made in an hour. But there was one other important thing the manager had impressed on him, which he could not recall. He stared at an architect's water color of the Hotel Beau Site and presently remembered it. "By the way," he observed, "you won't mind giving me a letter to that effect. It's a custom of the house."

"I'll do it," Baumgarten said, ringing an electric bell, "but of course that's conditional on the delivery being exactly on time."

"We are known," said Chester with what calmness he could muster, "as practical, punctual printers."

The stenographer took an incredible time to get the letter ready. Suppose Baumgarten were to become suddenly ill and the letter should never be signed! But when it was handed to him he found it hard to control his joy. The

stenographer little knew what a narrow escape she had of being waltzed around the sacred chambers of her employer, but the gracious damsel to whom this marvelous piece of luck was due was enraptured at the gift an hour later of a gigantic box of candies. The elevator man who passed the time of day with Chester and remarked that business was looking up, felt a dollar bill thrust in his hand. "Buy a cigar," said the generous stranger. The man looked at it lovingly and on his way home purchased a box of them at a department store and smoked two solemnly every Sunday.

Chester received the especial felicitations of the manager, who introduced him to the president, secretary and treasurer. These gentlemen, hearing of his exploit, commended him according to their several manners. The president said he was to be congratulated on getting with such a house; the secretary remarked morosely that the less one knew about printing the better chance of success there was; the treasurer said that he wished he had fifteen hundred dollars of commission coming to him.

CHAPTER XVII

WAR DECLARED

"To every man there come noble thoughts, that pass across his heart like great white birds . . . alas, they do not count; they are strangers whom we are surprised to see, whom we dismiss with impatient gestures." — *Maeterlinck*.

IT was the thought of this splendid commission which would shortly be his that raised his spirits to such a pitch that he could hardly wait until Sunday. He was afraid almost that the footman who answered the bell must see triumph written on his face. He looked south and saw the twenty-story Beau Site rising into the wintry sky with a sense of personal gratification. Failure was no longer a word in his vocabulary. He could think of the bitter episodes of his early search for work with a smile.

The footman looked at him with a blandly inquiring air. "Is Miss Ellis at home?" Chester asked.

"She is not, sir," returned the man.

"When will she be?" Chester asked, utterly taken aback.

"She is out of town," the footman said.

"Is Mrs. Godfrey in?"

"She too is out of town."

"My name is Vincent," said Chester desperately, "I think it very likely that Miss Ellis may have left a letter for me."

"I think not, sir," the man replied.

"Please find out at once," Chester said.

"The housekeeper is out and there is nobody else who could inform me."

"Where is Miss Ellis?"

"I have not asked, sir," the footman said, as though any similar inquiry savored of gross impertinence.

"I will call again," said Chester.

It was plain that the man either could not tell or was concealing his knowledge. If so, by whose orders, Chester asked himself. Seriously disturbed, he returned to the room he was to vacate the next day and penned a long letter to Norah, breathing a certain tender reproach that she had not warned him or allowed him to say good-bye. He had not long gone from the Godfrey house when Renalls came. He was well known to the entire

staff of servants and the footman who had given such unsatisfying answers to Chester had formerly been in his service.

"I am going to Jamaica tomorrow," said the financier, "and will take any mail." He was handed a number of letters. "And this," said the footman, "was left an hour ago by Mr. Vincent."

Renalls added it to the others carelessly, betraying by no gesture his feelings. When he read it through, he saw in it the death-knell to his ambitions and postponed for a few days his visit south. All the other letters but Vincent's were readdressed and sent off, and he began his schemes for the wreck of Norah's mines and the ruin of her lover.

The girl, acting under the immediate orders of her physician, had taken ship to Jamaica at a few hours' notice. Telephoning on the instant to Number One Wall Street, she was soon in connection with Enderby's managing clerk, who replied that he knew nothing of the address of Mr. Vincent, but only that he called there for mail. She had only time to scribble a note to Richard when the boat sailed. Monday found Richard impatiently awaiting Biggs' arrival at his office.

He said there were no letters but that on the Saturday previous a lady had called him up. Richard left discouraged. The letter he sought had been posted too late and reached Biggs by the second delivery.

Back to his new work went Richard, strangely wearied of it now he had lost his lady and full of dismal boding at her silence. The day passed slowly; nobody wanted to buy printing. On Tuesday he received Norah's note. She gave no address but said she would write instantly on deciding her place of stay. Life at once assumed a cheerful aspect and he made a small sale. It seemed that men would buy more readily of a cheerful seller.

The promised letter had not come by the middle of the week — he was impatient of times and tides — and he sought the society pages of the New York daily which gives the doings of fashionable Americans at the winter resorts. There was a paragraph devoted to the West Indies.

"Mrs. Godfrey of New York, and party, are staying at the Meadows Hotel, Constant Springs," he read. In the column of advertising opposite was an advertisement of it. "This select house," it ran, "is patronized by the elite of both hemi-

spheres." A limited number of guests were received; he saw it was recommended for its air of luxurious quiet and it was kept by Valentine Faustin Meadows. It was his Meadows, the excellent Meadows of ten years' faithful service, that perfect valet whom envious nature had deprived of hair! The Meadows who had fallen victim to the tender passion and had succumbed to a widow and a select hotel!

Such a distrust had Chester conceived of the suave flunkey that he was disposed to doubt that his letter had been forwarded. He could not banish the memory of Renalls. He wrote two letters. One was to his old servant congratulating him on his lot in life and asking that the enclosed letter be given to Miss Norah Ellis if she were at the hotel. To Norah he wrote a letter which still had some ring of tender reproach in it, begging for word of her. He was impetuous to a degree which allowed him to forget that letters from the Pearl of the Caribbean take many days to arrive.

Renalls was already on his way South when Chester's letter was mailed. He found the girl much better. The milder climate, the balmier air and brighter skies had brought back the color

to her cheeks and endowed her with new energy. She was of a disposition which craved for the sun and warmth of the South but she chafed under the knowledge that three more weeks must elapse before she could store up enough energy to carry her through the rigors of a northern winter. She rather dreaded Renalls' visit but it promised her relief from the boredom inflicted on her by Mrs. Godfrey. She noted with gratitude that he had brought a violin. She was in a mood for music; and under its influence the financier allowed his gentler side to be seen.

He played with especial brilliancy when, after dinner, music was suggested. He began with Dvorak's Humoreske, a work he had heard played within the week by such artists as Mischa Elman and Fritz Kreisler. He had never played it so well. Usually his playing was cold and unimpassioned but tonight there was something of the Austrian virtuoso's heart and tenderness in it.

His accompanist heard the new note in it and wondered. He finished by playing the Devil's Trill, that fantastic, strange piece which the master of evil played in one of Tartini's dreams.

"You never played more brilliantly," the girl said, as he put his instrument away.

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"I always play well when I'm winning," he said with a slow smile.

"Winning what?" she demanded.

"You, Norah," he returned, softly.

"My dear Charlie," she retorted with a touch of impatience, "why begin that all over again? You are not winning me. I'm not to be won."

"'A woman — therefore to be won,' " he quoted. He looked at her keenly, "Unless, of course, someone else has already won you."

She colored. "My affairs are my own concern," she said, coldly.

"And mine, too," he said. "So long as you are free, I shall think of them as mine."

"Even if I tell you you have no right?"

"You can't tell me that," he returned, watching her expression. Chester's letter, burned into his brain, was even now in his pocket. It was like reading a book to which he had the key. The girl had dreaded some such scene as this. He had often declared that when thwarted he was without mercy. But it seemed a pitiful thing to have to evade answering him, to seem ashamed of the glory that had come to her.

"I can tell you that," she answered. "You have no right."



"Don't let us quarrel," she pleaded. Page 339.

"What is his name?" the man demanded. He was amused at having her at a disadvantage, of knowing certainly what she would tell him. The black rage which had possessed him on reading Chester's letter had, by this time, crystallized into an emotion better under control.

"Have you thought what a gross impertinence such a question is?" she asked.

He shrugged his shoulders. "If you are ashamed of it," he began.

She interrupted him. "I'm not," she cried proudly.

"It looks like it," he commented. "Here am I, an old friend and the man who offers you his name and fortune. I'm not a stranger. Don't you think the least you can do is to tell me the name of the man who has been successful where I failed?" She saw before her only the kindly Renalls, who had indeed proffered name and fortune and had been her faithful friend; her anger died away. "Don't let us quarrel," she pleaded.

"Who is he?" the other demanded, still without passion.

"It's Mr. Vincent," she returned. "You met him at the little dance."

"Do you seriously suppose I am going to congratulate you?" he demanded.

"Why not?" she cried. "Aren't you big enough to forgive another man?"

"A man — yes," he retorted, "but not a man like that."

Her sympathy for him vanished; she was no longer nervous but cool and self-possessed, ready to fight, with as ruthless a manner as his own, for the honor of the man she loved.

"And why not?" she asked steadily.

"Norah," he returned, "if I can't get you I should like the winner to be someone better than this man Vincent. What do you know about him?"

"These things are not measured by years," she said.

"They should be measured by common sense. I don't doubt your loyalty but I do doubt your previous knowledge of him. I have evidence to prove that he is a common swindler recently imprisoned for beating hotels in the regular manner."

"Do you think I believe it?" she said.

"I'm sure you don't," he retorted. "Later on you'll have to; I shall furnish you with the proofs."

You think my jealousy is making me take his character away. Well, I'll admit my jealousy, but my evidence is from the magistrate's court. You can see for yourself. I placed him where he belonged the first time I saw him. That sort makes a hit with you women because they've got the devil's own nerve and can pirouette like dancing masters and ride like Durland's instructors. They've got to make these points when they are playing with honest men and then they always lose."

She yawned delicately, "Your detective exploits must have taken up a great deal of your time," she said.

He flushed a little. "I suppose you won't believe they were undertaken for your benefit?"

She shook her head and smiled. "It would be unbelievable," she said.

"He'll lose the last rubber," Renalls snapped.

"Then he'll lose it well," she cried.

"I'll admit that," Renalls returned. "He'll carry it off with a high hand and bluff some fools into thinking he's the winner, but he won't fool me, and he'll lose you, Norah." He leaned forward and spoke more slowly, with studied deliberation. "He's after your money, and he'll

drop you directly he hears you are on the losing side."

"But I'm not," she told him, "I'm winning."

"That's as it may be," he answered enigmatically, "the point is the man is worthless and you ought to have enough sense to see it."

"Do you think I am altogether a fool?" she demanded.

"There's 'not a woman of you," he exclaimed, "who can't be led away by just such a man as he. It makes heroines of some but it makes martyrs of most and you are the kind who'll find life has a bitter taste."

She looked at him with a certain pity. Not for one moment had any doubt of Chester's good faith entered her mind. She saw in Renalls' attitude the unscrupulous methods of the vindictive loser.

"I wish you would realize," she said, "that you are not serving your cause by talking like this. If you choose to quarrel, I shall be sorry, but I had long ago recognized it as inevitable."

"And why?" he ejaculated.

"To be frank," she returned, "my fiancé has no greater liking for you than you seem to have for him."

Renalls showed his teeth, "He's afraid of me," he said.

"You can't make me take you seriously," she replied. "This attitude on your part is merely ridiculous. You see, Charlie, I love him, and if a woman does that nothing else much matters, and I'm not going to be a heroine or a martyr or a woman with a bitter taste in her mouth, but just an ordinary, happy, contented sort of person."

"I came here," Renalls said, after a pause, "to offer you the opportunity to send him away and learn his true character. I shouldn't stand a better chance with you now, if you did that, but it might be different later on, because I can play a waiting game. For the last time, will you investigate his past life?"

She looked at him with a smile. "I will not," she said.

"Then it must be war between you and me," he cried.

"Very well," she agreed, "I am not afraid."

"Do you understand what such a declaration means?" he demanded. "Have you thought how it's going to affect your business interests?"

"The prospect doesn't worry me in the least," she returned idly.

"Then you haven't thought of it," he said grimly. "I'll make it clear. Since old Cosway died you've had no one to restrain you from pouring out your money in Brazil. You're now beginning to be pinched again. I know your business better than you do and if your venture isn't subscribed to by the public, you'll have to try to earn a living. Norah, do you know what sort of influence I wield in New York? It's a big thing and I'm at peace with the men who control what I don't. If they help you, they will be throwing down the gauntlet to me, and it isn't worth it." He repeated the words to give them emphasis, "It isn't worth it, I tell you. I can wreck your North Brazil Goldfields. You've never had an enemy before who bothered about it."

She grew restive under his steady stare and triumphant manner.

"But why should you be my enemy?" she asked.

"Because you won't guard yourself against an unprincipled adventurer."

"Let us leave his name out of it," she said. "This is a matter of business not concerning him. Why should you, to whom I owe so much, want to bring all your might to crush me?"

"Because I want you," he cried, "and if I can't have you when you are successful, I'll have you when you are in the dust and there isn't a friend of them all left to you." He bent forward. "Do you suppose he will be there, then?"

There was menace in his tone and a something which frightened her but she only smiled pityingly in return. "If I am in the dust and my friends desert me, I shall not be alone."

He sighed impatiently, that her splendid faith and courage should be wasted on an object he fully believed to be worthless.

"Admit for a moment," he urged, "that I am right and they all leave you."

"There'll be nothing of me worth having," she said simply.

"Norah, my dear," he said, "I'll take you. In that dark hour that must come I'll take you and worship you and I'll make you happy. Why defy me?"

"It's not defiance," she returned, "it's the absolute certainty I have that you are wrong."

"Very well," he said, "we are to fight. That's agreed. If you run against me in my own field you can't win. I see dire failure before you. I want you to listen to me carefully. When you

fail, when your dark hour comes and you have no money and no friends and he's taken himself off, I will come."

She spoke impatiently. "You haven't the power to frighten me."

"But you're afraid to admit it might happen. Norah, if he deserts you, will you forgive me for the wounds of battle and take me?"

"If he deserts me!" she repeated. "Charlie, you must be mad!"

"But if he does," Renalls demanded, "shall I have a chance?"

She did not answer the question. "I'd much rather have you as a friend," she said wistfully.

He shook his head. "Impossible. Remember, I'm your enemy now and I shall fight any way I can." He looked at her with open admiration. "You're worth fighting for, Norah."

"I have been fought for and won," she said significantly.

He held out his hand. "For the last time, Norah. I don't shake hands or dine with foes. I'll return when it's all over."

"Very well," she said, "it's to be a fight then — a fair fight."

"I said nothing about fairness," he replied;

“when I fight it’s to win and I use anything that is handy.” He paused for a moment. “I saw a play last winter where two men were fighting. One flicked the sword out of the other fellow’s hand and then picked it up and handed it back to keep on duelling. Such a fool thing I never saw! I don’t fight like that. I’m just warning you.”

Renalls walked back to his hotel, already planning his attack. Before his boat sailed he called upon Mrs. Godfrey. “I wanted to see you particularly,” he said. She was a little nervous; against his advice she had plunged into Readings at the wrong moment and was fearful lest he should rebuke her and refuse to advise her in future operations. But he did nothing of the kind. From his pocket he took an envelope addressed in bold, flowing handwriting to Miss Norah Ellis. “Should you remember that writing again?” he demanded.

“Easily,” she responded. “Why?”

“It is the handwriting of the crook who passes as Richard Vincent and is after Norah’s money.”

He elaborated in a highly colored manner what of Vincent’s doings he had learned from the reporter and soon brought his hearer to the verge

of hysteria. That she, Alice Godfrey, had entertained in her house a common swindler and that he was engaged to Norah was almost incredible and wholly horrifying. "What must be done?" she cried.

"We must," returned Renalls, craftily, "protect her against herself. If letters from him come here, I should suggest that they be burned unread."

Mrs. Godfrey virtuously declared that it would be beneath her to open any letters addressed to others. The ethical difference between that and merely destroying them seemed to her very marked.

Renalls left her well content. He had noticed a growing jealousy between the widow and her cousin and he was sure that Norah's fortune was coveted more than her company. He had pointed out that if she lost this fortune she would be dependent on relatives. And more than all he had impressed upon her the necessity of getting the mail before Norah did. This was not difficult since the girl had been ordered to rest well into the morning. If inquiries were instituted, Mrs. Godfrey could fall back upon flat denial, which had often helped her before.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BRIGHTER SIDE

“In choice of instruments, it is better to choose men of a plainer sort, that are like to do that that is committed to them.” — *Bacon*.

THERE are men and women who, forced by circumstances, come to middle age with never an opportunity to display their kindness of heart and innate sympathy with lovers in distress. It was so with Mrs. Valentine Meadows. She had served three mistresses faithfully but they had not been employers capable of stirring romantic regard. They had, in fact, dispelled many of her dreams, but she still regarded the world in a kindly light. Meadows, bald, respectable and with a goodly sum saved, was not in the least like the knightly figure which as a girl she had thought upon, but he had a true heart and she was very happy.

This conjunction of loving hearts, hungering, for some object upon which to lavish affection, found it in the furtherance of Richard Chester's romance. Meadows had been overjoyed to receive the letter from his old employer and had pondered

much as to why he was to be known in future as Richard Vincent. He took the letter straightway to the apartment occupied by Mrs. Godfrey and her cousin and met the former coming along the corridor. "Will you please give this to Miss Ellis?" he said and thought his errand well accomplished. Not yet telling his wife of Chester's note, he led the conversation to Miss Ellis.

Mrs. Meadows, it must be remembered, was incurably romantic. "Poor young lady," she observed, "she looks to me as though she was pining for someone who wasn't here."

Her husband regarded her with pride. This remarkable woman had put her finger on the spot instantly, intuitively, admirably. She looked at him a moment later. "It couldn't be the air here," she asserted.

"Oh no," he agreed. It was an article of faith with them that there existed no ailment that could not be cured by the climate of Constant Springs. Meadows hugged to himself the pleasurable belief that the note he took might banish this look his wife observed. Mysteriously he took Vincent's letter from his pocket and handed it to his helpmeet. "Not a word," he said. "Absolutely private between us three."

The next day he saw Norah and hoped that she looked brighter. He made bold to speak to her. "I hope you got the letter, madam," he said. She looked at him eagerly. That she had received no communication from Chester weighed on her. Meadows saw her face brighten. "What letter?" she demanded.

"Yesterday afternoon I brought a letter," he said.

"From whom?" she cried, "I got none."

Fortunately for the lovers Meadows possessed a certain cautiousness of disposition which had before rescued him from the predicaments into which men of lively sympathy may fall. He felt with a certainty not to be doubted that he had hit upon some underhanded plot aimed at his Richard Chester and this adorable young lady. To tell her suddenly might precipitate matters unduly. He felt in need of feminine counsel but in lieu of it an inspiration was born which he afterwards considered as genius.

"Are you not Mrs. Godfrey?" he demanded.

The light left her eyes. "I am Miss Ellis," she sighed.

The excellent Mrs. Meadows listened eagerly. "It's my belief, there's a plot," she said. "I

don't like Mrs. Godfrey and I don't like that Mr. Renalls. It's my conviction he's in love with Miss Ellis. You must write to your Mr. Chester and tell him everything." Meadows accordingly indited a long letter to Chester, not without the feeling that he was taking a liberty, and breathed a prayer that some beneficent being would watch over it as it winged its way northward.

Mrs. Meadows made a point of going in the sitting room shared by Norah and her cousin but usually found the two together. On one of the occasions when Mrs. Godfrey was out she came in for some purpose in itself an excuse and looked closely at the girl. Mrs. Meadows noted the weariness apparent on the exquisite face. It was of Chester she was thinking. His friend, young and vigorous, had been ground under the wheels of a surface car and wiped out of existence. And if some such accident had happened to her Richard what chance had she of learning it? She sighed heavily and Mrs. Meadows could stand silent no longer.

"Ah, miss," she declared darkly, "if we saw all the people we want to see and had all the letters we long for, how much happier we should be!"

"Yes," said the other slowly, "how much

happier we should be!" Then she turned to the woman in astonishment. For a moment she had not thought the remark strange, it fitted in with her thoughts so well, but now she recognized it as very odd. "Why do you say that?" she demanded.

"Those who have hearts, see." In the secrecy of the hotel office she confided in her husband. "She's breaking her heart for him," she declared.

"But I don't see that we can do anything," her husband said.

"If Mr. Chester's the man you paint him I think he'll come right away on receipt of your letter," she said.

"Suppose he hasn't the money?" Meadows hazarded.

"We could send it," she returned promptly.

The man shook his head. "He's as proud," he said, striving for an apt simile, "he's as proud as I should be if I were a gentleman."

"You are a gentleman," flared his wife.

"Yes, my dear," Meadows returned humbly, "but I wasn't born to it."

The days passed as slowly to the Meadows as to Norah. The two old people were on the tiptoe of expectation when the train came in which con-

nected with Kingston and the New York boat. Meadows stared out of the porch pale with excitement. "My dear," he said with shaky voice, "it's him. It's Mr. Richard." There was affection in his tone. "It's my Mr. Richard." He noted quickly that there was no trace of poverty in his former employer. He was as well dressed as ever. "He's made good," muttered the ex-valet, proudly ushering him into his private room. Mrs. Meadows purred about him in an ecstasy of pleasure. It was the first time she had ever assisted first hand at a meeting of parted lovers.

"She's just pining for you, sir," she declared. "I never saw such a lovely young lady in all my born days. It's a wicked world!" she concluded fiercely.

"When can I see her?" he demanded.

"Now," that excellent creature declared. "There goes Mrs. Godfrey. She'll be taking a walk about now and Miss Ellis will be alone."

"Mrs. Meadows," Chester said, "you have a heart of gold and so has your husband. Will you take me to her?"

When she returned to her husband a few minutes

later there were tears in her eyes. "Oh, if you could have seen her face!" she cried. "They just stood there for a moment looking at each other and then he took her in his arms. They didn't remember I was there and they didn't hear me shut the door. For all they knew," Mrs. Meadows concluded with perfect satisfaction, "I might have belonged to the planet Mars and gone back home again."

When the first greetings between the lovers were over Norah looked at him with satisfaction. "How well you look," she cried, "and how prosperous."

"I am," he laughed, and took from his pocket a little package. It was a big sapphire ring. He knew it was her favorite stone. "It is the color of your eyes," he said.

"Dick, how adorable of you," she exclaimed. "But what a beauty! How on earth have you managed it?"

"You've brought me luck," he laughed. "I'm a prosperous seller of high grade printing." He told her of the Beau Site order. "And the day before I sailed two more orders came in just on account of that wonderful booklet."

She grew serious when he told her of the letter

Meadows delivered to Mrs. Godfrey. At first she could not credit the treachery. "What will you do?" he inquired.

"I must ask what she meant. There can't be any excuse." She sighed. "I shall have to give up living here. I shall miss those darling children, but that Alice should behave so, makes it impossible that I should remain her friend. She might have separated us forever, Dick." She shivered. "I can't bear to think of it! She had better not see you here. I'll send for you as soon as I've had it out with her. I'm sure the first sight of my ring will tell her what's coming. Kiss me, Dick, and then be where I can send for you. I'm afraid to let you see how furious I can be."

An hour later Mrs. Meadows informed him that Mrs. Godfrey was leaving for Kingston and that Miss Ellis was to remain. He watched from the Meadows sitting room and presently beheld Mrs. Godfrey, bereft of her usual self-complacence, drive away. Then a message came to him from Norah.

"It's over then?" he said.

"Such puerile, silly excuses," the girl retorted. "That you were a bad wicked fortune hunter and

she looked upon me as her young cousin in need of protection. She said she burned the letter."

"She must have burned two," he said. "But what direct charge did she make against me?"

"They were too absurd even to remember," she returned. "I don't believe in them and I sha'n't repeat them."

"Do so as a favor," he begged. "If you don't I shall think you fear I am unable to clear myself. I'm grateful for your generosity, dear, but I want to explain things so there's never a doubt about it." He listened to her brief description of his incarceration in a police cell.

"Perfectly true," he admitted, "but hear my side of it too."

The week that followed was one of the most perfect of their lives. Like happy children they explored the beautiful island and the color came back into her cheeks and the brightness into her eyes, and over the twain the Meadows busied themselves with affectionate solicitations.

It was during this time that Norah unfolded her hopes for the future of her Brazilian mines and told him in detail of her struggles and the imminent success, and that the mining man to

whom she wished to commend him was Mendoza, her partner. "So you see my wilful, obstinate proud Richard, that your wife will need you. Every moment you spent in those musty old libraries was spent for me."

He looked at her a little doubtfully. "I don't want to be a mere passenger," he objected.

"You shall be captain and owner and first mate," she cried, "unless you wish me to advertise for someone."

"It isn't that," he said earnestly. "It's a feeling that I sha'n't be worthy of it all. I'm willing to work like twenty men but I've found out lately that I know very little."

"I need you," she told him gaily; she had never been in more radiantly high spirits. "I need you more than ever now because Charlie Renalls has made an open declaration of war."

"When?" he cried.

"In this very room a few days ago. I am to be brought down to the dust, — he harped continually about this dust by the way — you who are only pursuing me for mere money, will instantly desert me. Along comes King Cophetua Renalls and raises me from the mire to share the house he is building on Riverside Drive. He ar-

ranged the whole thing and you'll admit that he isn't one to talk idly."

Chester looked more disturbed than the girl. "No," he agreed, "Renalls isn't an idle boaster as a rule."

"Wherefore you perceive my need," she said, "and if you talk any more nonsense about carving out a separate career while I am being destroyed by mine enemy I shall think you aren't in the least like the other Richard they called Cœur de Lion."

"You've put things in a totally different light," he said. "Before, when I thought I should be just useless, I felt I shouldn't be a man if I didn't try and make good alone. But if Renalls has threatened you and I am earning enough money to get proper training in assaying and the rest of it so that I can be worth something, why, you won't find me proud. I rather like the idea of a fight with Renalls."

"I'm afraid you've quite a wicked temper," she laughed.

"I detest him," Chester admitted frankly. "I never felt a man's hate more than his. When I first met him he looked at me and I could feel that he hated me. I don't wonder he hates me.

If he had got engaged to a fascinating enchantress with sapphire eyes and hair like imprisoned sunshine I should have blackjacked him some dark night."

"You're not a business man," the girl declared, looking up at him. "You ought to be giving serious thought how to circumvent him instead of talking in this absurd way."

"I am not a man of business at the present moment," he replied, "I am in spirit a knight errant. I should have enjoyed that life," he said reflectively. "I know exactly how they felt when they got into their armor and made all the other knights or villains they met admit that their lady was the peerless damsel."

"I can quite imagine you to be a very overbearing character," she said. "I fear Mr. Meadows can't be genuine when he talks out in that extravagant way."

"Has Meadows been talking?" he demanded.

"And Mrs. Meadows too," she declared. "I have your every characteristic expounded by them. You are the one man who is a hero to his valet!" She looked at him with a smile. "I am getting horridly proud of you."

"If you knew how unworthy I am of you,"

he said penitently, "you wouldn't feel proud." He shook his head. "Meadows makes far too much of it. He doesn't tell of the innumerable times I have cursed him for my own faults and called maledictions on his innocent soul, when it's been my own doing all the time. Dear old Meadows! Well, I shall leave you in their care without fear."

She sighed. "And you must go tomorrow?"

"I only had a week's leave," he told her, "exclusive of the time taken by the journey, and I have several what I call prospects looking for my coming. I tell you, Norah, it's different from trying to sell books."

"Or salad dressing," she laughed. "How do you do it?"

"Luck," he said cheerfully. "Feeling happy and looking prosperous."

She was looking at her engagement ring. "You're fearfully extravagant, Dick. I could have done with a much simpler ring than this."

"I'll buy you better ones," he laughed. "My dear, I'm in for a run of stupendous luck. I shall need it when Renalls has made us bankrupts. And I need it for mining books and instruments.

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When I'm your mine manager I intend to be the last thing in expert mineralogical knowledge." He laughed like a happy boy. "It's rather fun earning one's own living."

CHAPTER XIX

JOHN CHESTER'S OFFER

"La pire des mésalliances est celle du cœur."

HE bade her good-bye at the Kingston dock, absolutely confident of happier times ahead. She loved him; she had broken with Renalls and he and she were going to win. It was a good world and a kind one and he watched the purple hills of Jamaica fade into the distance as nearly perfectly happy as he had ever been in his life. He settled himself to read the New York papers which he had bought before sailing. He found them full of his brother's divorce. John Chester stared at him from the pages of the evening journals seemingly not a whit altered. He read the accounts in much perturbation. Although he had never met Mrs. John Chester he had always heard that she lived in amity with her husband. There was not a breath of scandal against John Chester's name. He had been granted his case in an undefended suit and the papers were full of his history, his money, his

brilliance as a man of affairs. There was in most instances a reference to Richard. "Mr. Chester," he read, "is the elder brother of the Richard Chester who was formerly much in the public eye as an owner of blue ribbon winners. He was also an explorer of note and the old Yale full-back. He disappeared from his former associations about a year ago and is supposed to be with an expedition in Thibet."

But he could only think of the terrible blow this must be to John's pride. It must have been a crucifixion to find himself in everyone's mouth and to be pitied for a deserted husband and a wronged friend.

So soon as he possibly could after landing in New York he went to Number One Wall Street to get the letter that Norah had written and posted after he had left for the West Indies. He was passing through the picture gallery which opens from the platform when his attention was arrested by a painting of the mountains behind Constant Springs, where Norah had ridden with him but a week ago. So intent was he that he failed to note that Charles Renalls was standing at another easel just behind him. It was while these two men were looking at their separate can-

vases that Biggs hurried by. He had recently received a raise in salary and was not without hope that it might eventually be the firm of Enderby and Biggs. He was not in a mood to respect the fallen, as he conceived Chester to be. He slapped him on the back with what he felt was a man-of-the-world air, a careless manner indicative of breeding. "Hallo," said Biggs, "There are letters for you at the office. It's the first time she's written to you. Perhaps the lady's going to stick to you after all." Biggs cocked his hat at a rakish angle. "It's me for single blessedness every time," he asserted. "This divorce nonsense may be fashionable but I don't like it."

Chester looked at him for a moment and from his expression it would seem that the little man before him with the padded shoulders was a distasteful spectacle, "Thanks," he said briefly and turned away.

Biggs reddened, and turning away, came face to face with Renalls. Now Biggs had always considered Renalls to be one of the mighty men of the "Street." There was no incident in his career of which he was more proud than his successful service of the capitalist with a subpœna. A no-

toriously difficult task, it had been Biggs' lot when professional process servers had failed, to succeed. And Renalls, who might just as readily have kicked him from the office, laughed at the ingenuity displayed and gave him a good cigar. Even now the financier occasionally threw him a nod, which enhanced his reputation in his own forensic set. Biggs was not pleased that the man whom he esteemed so highly should have witnessed this snub, but he was reassured by the financier's strange affability.

"So you are acting for him?" he asked, nodding after Chester's retreating figure. Not a word of Biggs' remarks to Vincent had been lost.

"Yes," Biggs admitted. He was glad that a clerk in another law office passed at that moment. "Enderby has turned his affairs over to me."

Renalls drew his bow at a venture. "Look here, Mr. Biggs," he said, "I don't want you to violate professional secrets — a man like you wouldn't anyway, even if I did — but I'm interested in his case, just as a lot of other men are. It's for divorce, isn't it?" His eyes were fixed on Biggs who instantly felt as a small boy before a stern school teacher,

"Yes," he answered meekly.

Renalls turned to the picture he had been admiring. "Are you a judge of pictures?" he asked.

"Pretty good," returned Biggs, feeling relieved, "but I don't fall for these impressionists." He felt certain that Renalls approved his views.

"I'm in a hurry now," said the financier, glancing at his watch, "but I wanted to have a little business talk with you. Suppose you lunch with me some day next week at the Players. I'll 'phone you."

He hurried off to leave the managing clerk trembling with delight. He was unbearably arrogant toward his inferiors for the rest of the day.

Richard Chester had left when he reached the office, taking with him two letters. One from Norah and the other in a strange cramped handwriting, that yet looked familiar. Norah's was not to be opened in the street, it was too sacred; but he cut the other envelope without hesitation. The signature, John F. Chester, was the first of his brother's writing he had seen for years. It was dated the day before and bore the address of a great New York hotel.

"DEAR RICHARD:" (it ran),

"I am anxious to see you directly you can arrange to come. I am ill or would have sought you out. Pray let no past disagreements prevent your coming instantly."

Since Richard's business day was already planned out and in his new mood for hard work he allowed nothing to stand in the way, he postponed his visit to John until the morrow.

He was shown into a great suite of apartments overlooking the Park, and after a few minutes' wait in an outer room was ushered into a light luxurious apartment where on a sofa his brother lay. Except that he was gaunter and yellower than he had ever seen him, the younger brother noted very little alteration. John Chester had ever lacked the urbanity which distinguished Richard. He did not hold out his hand. Richard thought he could detect the same old sneering expression. John was the first to speak. "Please sit down," he said. "I am recommended to lie down a great deal or I would have come to see you."

As Richard looked closer he perceived that the other man was much aged and wore the looks of suffering.

"I'd no idea you had been ill," he said.

"I kept that out of the papers," John retorted. "Do you suppose if my wife had known that I was to be dead in a year she would have been so eager to get rid of me? She'd have been more cautious and waited for her widow's portion instead of hurrying into a second marriage."

"You can't be serious," cried Richard. "What is the matter?"

"Death is the last thing I should jest about," the elder said quietly. "What I say is true. Half a dozen specialists in as many countries have agreed that I have cancer and that cancer is incurable. They do not all agree on the amount of life that remains to me but I have struck a mean and find myself with rather less than a year."

Richard was genuinely shocked by these tidings. Although in recent years there had been nothing in common between them, the love which had come into his life gave him a closer perception of the sufferings of others and a greater toleration for their peculiarities. He reviewed mentally the cause of their quarrel. It seemed so remote and — he wondered if it were treachery so to regard it — so trivial.

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"John," he said, "I'm terribly upset to hear this."

"I did not ask you to visit me in order to enlist your sympathy. I had other reasons."

Richard detected the note of resentment in the other's voice. It was plain that he did not crave for friendship.

"What were they?" Richard asked, his voice less sympathetic.

"Since my wife is married to someone else and gave me no children, and my illness precludes a second marriage, it follows that you are my heir. Did you ever think of that?"

"Never till this moment."

"The fact remains therefore," said John, "that you are heir to the Chester estate. Do you know what it is worth?"

"I got a million and a half," Richard responded.

"Less than your share," his brother retorted. "Our father was not in any sense a good business man. When he died the estate was much involved. I have spent twenty years in straightening it out and consolidating our interests. While we do not rank with the richest families we have more ready money and money in gilt-edged securities

than you would believe. I shall leave not less than twenty millions."

"That's news to me," his brother exclaimed.

"I've paid to be kept out of the papers," the other said, "just as I imagine you must have paid to have all your doings talked' about a few years ago."

"There you're wrong," cried Richard. "I never bought publicity."

John Chester waved him down. "I'm not really interested whether you did or didn't," he said. "I want you to understand that I have built up the Chester fortunes to a height they have never before attained. It is to be your task to conserve them."

Richard was conscious that his brother regarded him with the cold, impersonal stare which had always irked him. Against his will he felt rising within him the old antagonism.

His brother spoke again. "Are you equal to the task?"

"I don't know," said Richard, "I'm not at all sure that I am."

"A few years ago you would have said 'yes' without a moment's hesitation," sneered John.

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"Many things may happen in a year," Richard reminded him.

"That may be," returned John drily, "but there's one thing I want to make perfectly clear to you. I have sent for you not because I expect you to bear me any affection, but because you're the last of the Chesters and what the Chesters have they should hold. If there had been another brother I should have sent for him instead. Do I make it clear?"

"Almost unnecessarily so," Richard said.

John looked at him curiously. "Don't you bear any malice?"

"No," returned Chester slowly. "I did once but that's done with."

"Why?" snapped the invalid.

"I don't think I've ever been the hater you were," the younger man answered, "and — well, John, I'm engaged to be married and that wipes out the memory of other days."

"Who is she?" John demanded. "What is her name?"

"That, my dear John," said Richard urbanely, "is something we can discuss later." John's peremptory way galled him.

"What are you doing now?" was his brother's next question.

"I am preparing for the position of mine manager."

"You must drop that idea now," John told him.

"I think not," said Richard, "in fact nothing but death would make me drop it."

"But don't you understand," said the other, "that you are to get my money? Don't you understand that I shall want you here to instruct you how to manage my interests till they become yours?" He laughed ironically. "This stupid mining scheme must be dropped. It will take you a good many hours of the day to get the hang of our New York real estate, but that won't be as hard as this mining business."

"I'm used to hard work," said Richard.

"It was time you turned over a new leaf," said John.

"There are few people who can tell a truth in a more disagreeable manner than you," the younger retorted. "It's done much to make you popular."

"Come, come," cried John with a faint smile, "I'm not so bad as I sound, Richard. Remember I've burning hell inside me and things of late have made me irritable. I understand that all this

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must confuse you at first but you'll see that no matter what you are engaged on now, it must be given up instantly."

"I'm afraid I see nothing of the sort," Richard returned. "I've sworn to go through with what I'm doing and I sha'n't go back on my word."

"I think you will though," John said sneeringly. "When you stop to consider the difference between getting back to your own life and the selling of printing you'll come off your high horse."

"What do you know about my selling printing?" Richard demanded.

His brother pointed to a black japanned deed box standing on a table. "In the top of that," he said, "is a long blue envelope. I wish you'd get it for me. Here," he remarked a moment later, "is a fairly reliable account of the various occupations which engaged your energies since you parted with Meadows down to the time you started as a salesman of printing. This document is mostly from the pen of a detective who resided for that purpose in your rooming house."

Richard glared at him angrily. "I consider it a most unwarrantable piece of impertinence," he cried. "What right had you to pry into my miseries? I didn't disgrace your name."

"It may have been impertinent," John said carelessly, "but I wanted to know what my heir was doing. I'm not sure that I shouldn't have been glad if you had disgraced the name you took; in that case I should have made Doris my heiress although Lord St. Mabyn has plenty of Chester money already."

Richard paced up and down the room fuming. John watched him in grim amusement. "There was a gentleman in your lodging house," he remarked, "who complained bitterly that your habit of eating in your bedroom brought the mice to his. And there was a man who shovelled snow at your side who got double pay. He was paid for working and paid for watching. A taciturn individual whom you angered exceedingly by your extraordinary activity and threats to work the whole winter if the snow obliged."

Richard paused in his promenading. "Just like you, John," he cried. "By Jove, John, you're the same genial kind-hearted being as ever! Was your spy ever as hungry or hopeless as your brother, I wonder?"

John shrugged his shoulders. "You brought it on yourself," he said carelessly, "and I'm going to give you the opportunity to get out of it."

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"I am out of it," flared the young man, "and no thanks to you. I'm making money and I'm happy."

"I shall ask for your confidences some other time," John said. "At present I am rather fatigued and I want to say concisely that you must alter your mode of life to suit me. You will have what money you need. You can take up your existence where you laid it down after that fatal card game."

Richard shook his head. "I'm afraid that doesn't make the appeal to me it might have done six months ago. I've cut adrift from that idle life now. I've been in the depths as you know. I've tasted starvation and misery and I've come out of it a different man."

The other's smile was full of sarcasm. "I see," he said, "a reformed character, a great and good man."

"Not better and not greater," Richard answered gently, "but just different. I'm making enough to live on; a good woman is going to marry me and I'll be no man's pensioner."

John interrupted him impatiently. "Talk sense," he snapped. "Come to the point now instead of by degrees. Of course you'll accept,

and I want you plainly to understand my conditions."

Richard looked at him in astonishment. Had money and power so taken a hold on the elder Chester that he could not conceive of a man who would not submit to dictation!

"My conditions will not be hard," said John. "You will be under my orders and what acquaintances you have made in this submerged year of yours must never know who you were. You start *de novo*, or better still you eliminate the year. I saw by a paper that you were supposed to be travelling in Thibet. Very well, you were in Thibet."

"Excellent," said Richard in gentle irony. "I see exactly what to do. Those friends who helped me in my hard year must be forgotten." He looked at John as though in doubt. "I wonder if you will approve of the young woman who has consented to be Mrs. Richard Chester."

"I doubt it," said John in the utmost seriousness. "In fact I think some arrangement will have to be made. No publicity, you understand, but you can have what money you need. Where are you going?" he demanded, when Richard

grabbed his hat and rose to his feet. "What are you doing?"

"Thanking Heaven," returned Richard, "that I remember you are an invalid and that I can curb my temper. John, I never wished you were a big husky man as fervently as I desire it now. But since you are an invalid I must content myself with wishing you good day."

"You madman," cried John, white-faced with anger, "do you know what you're doing? Do you realize that you are throwing away millions? You've heard my ultimatum!"

Richard controlled himself with difficulty. The thought that the other had suggested that Norah was to be bought off had made him furious. "Damn your ultimatum!" he cried and so took his leave.

CHAPTER XX

IN THE BALANCE

“A man’s nature runs to herbs or weeds; therefore, let him reasonably water the one, and destroy the other.” — *Bacon*.

THE months which followed Richard’s interview with his brother were the busiest of his life. His success with the printing house, while not so phenomenal as his first week promised, yet allowed him to save a considerable sum of money. His evenings were taken up with his efforts to gain an assayer’s diploma and his Sundays made perfect by Norah’s company.

The placing of the stock of the North Brazil Goldfield on the market was delayed for many reasons, not the least of them being Mendoza’s continued absence. There had been trouble with the new cyanide plant, with the workers, with the weather, with everything, but at last the thing was floated and the financial and other papers with columns devoted to matters financial were informed of the ground floor opening they were invited to share.

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A couple of big failures and the rumor that an energetic president was about to menace great corporations caused an uneasiness in Wall Street which was reflected by the operations of big and little investors. A leading financial publication pointed out that the Brazilian goldfields were worked out. And the men whom Norah hoped to attract did not give themselves the trouble to examine the geography of the old Portuguese colony; if they had they would have found that the State in which the North Brazils Goldfield was situated had never shown either success or failure, since it was a virgin field. Rumors as to the gains of possible investment damned the thing from the start. The shares were subscribed for with irritating slowness and in this Norah beheld the influence of her declared enemy.

But she was not of the kind to give up hope and, with Chester, still had dreams of the undertaking of a future. Perhaps there were few things which gave her more complete gratification than the Sunday Richard brought her his diploma. They looked at the document with its important red seal in triumph. "This is to certify," she read proudly, "that Richard Vincent has passed through a course of study in the Assaying and

estimation of minerals for Gold and Silver by fire assay from all classes of ores, also Gravimetric and Volumetric assay of Copper from its ore."

"Why did you take up copper?" she demanded.

"Alaska," he told her. "Before I knew you I had dreams of Alaska and it's the richest mineral country in the world. It has a copper belt one hundred and fifty miles square. Supposing the Brazil scheme doesn't pan out and Renalls downs us, I shall have enough to take us out there to Alaska. Would you come?" he demanded suddenly.

"Do you suppose for a single moment, you silly boy, that I'm going to let you out of my sight?" she asked. "Of course I shall come with you." She looked at him anxiously. "Are you afraid we are going to lose?"

"I want to be prepared for contingencies. I saw Mowbray today," — Mowbray was Norah's attorney, — "and he said things weren't going well."

"He's wrong," she declared serenely. "I have plenty of resources left. And don't forget that Mr. Mendoza gets here on Tuesday. I have told

him about you and you'd better see him as soon as possible and bring him on here."

He walked to his rooms — now no longer ill furnished and obscurely situated — and was informed that a gentleman had called to see him and asked permission to wait. Since the gentleman drove up in a great limousine car with a man servant and peculation seemed out of the question, he was allowed to remain and had been in Chester's apartment for half an hour.

And John Chester awaiting him had not come there on any sudden impulse. Since his brother had definitely derided his offer he had thought much of the circumstances of the original quarrel. Richard was in measure to blame, as he was compelled to admit. And Marion Griffiths had tolerated him only because he was Richard's brother. There was never a faint hope that she might care for him. Never since the day he had by his lying broken off the match had he known happiness. His heart was in the quiet southern cloister despite the mask of stoical, cynical indifference he had shown these many years to his world. He was going down to the unknown, unloved and unmourned. And as he slowly set his house in order there came flocking many memories of the days

when Richard was his adoring brother and a true love existed between them.

As Richard entered the room he looked up wondering what reception he was to receive from this impetuous Chester. He admitted that if it was not cordial it was courteous. Richard's attitude was that of one slight acquaintance to another.

"I'm afraid you've been kept waiting a long while," he said.

"You are surprised I am here?" John asked.

"I can think of no good purpose being served," Richard said, "by your coming to see me. Our last interview was not pleasant but it defined a position I still adhere to."

"Is it such an insult then for one brother to want another to receive his money?"

"We are not brothers," Richard said slowly, "not brothers in spirit or sympathy. I can't conceive of any silly pride entering into the relations between father and son or brother and brother when they are fond of each other. There was no one I loved more than my father. From him I would have accepted anything. And if you and I had been the kind of brothers he hoped to see us it would have been different. But we're

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not, John. We're not even friends. I can't accept anything from you."

John did not speak for a moment. "I've been turning out old letters and burning them. I came across the first letter you ever wrote to me. It was after I gave you your first pony. You said I was the best brother ever known and you would love me for all time."

Richard looked at him gravely. "John," he said, "I don't like now when you are ill to have to say it, but whose fault was it I lost my love for you and why did you turn from being my good elder brother to a man who hated me?"

"I know, I know," said the older man wearily. "I lied to Marion. I wanted to win what I did not think you prized enough. It was a black thing to do, but haven't I been punished? I married a woman who played fast and loose with my honor. I lost my boy when he was a year old, and now I'm dying of agony. Has my life been so happy, then?"

Richard looked at him in a kindlier manner. "You've had a hard time, too."

"I have come," said the elder brother, "to ask your forgiveness for the wrong I did you. I shall die happier if I have it."

"It's yours," Richard returned gently. "I'm not revengeful, John. I'm too happy to bear malice."

John looked at him searchingly. "You'll accept my proposition now?"

"No, no! I've told you why. I'm happy and I'm on the way to prosperity and I have my own path to go independently."

"Richard," said the invalid with a voice that shook, "I came to ask you for more than forgiveness, but you make it very hard for me." He gazed into his brother's face with an expression that Richard could not understand. "I'm dying. There may be three months or there may be three weeks left — of course I ought not to be here — and I spend the twenty hours a day that I'm not under morphine thinking about what my failure of a life has been and what sort of blackness I'm going to find when it's over. Richard, boy, do you think I want to die without your love?"

He broke down and leaned on his arms and sobbed. Immeasurably affected, the younger man knelt at his side and put a strong arm about his thin, shaking shoulders. In that moment the bitter thoughts cherished for so many years were swept away and he saw only the big

brother who had loved him, now in need of his help.

"My dear old Jack," he cried, "my dear old chap!" He took the white hand and pressed it with a woman's tenderness. He could not trust himself to speak further. The spectacle of the haughty, unbending John Chester broken down and humbled banished on the instant what hard thoughts he had harbored.

Their reconciliation, disjointed at first by emotion, was complete, and Richard found himself confiding in the elder and the elder, proud in these confidences, forgot his misery.

But it was still with a certain timidity that John spoke of his brother's marriage.

"I want to meet her," he said. "I want at least to feel that there are people whom I can care for, in what's left of my life."

Richard from a locked drawer took the exquisite miniature. "Jack," he said impressively, "I have shown this to nobody else. It's something I hold too sacred to pass around."

"She is very beautiful," the other said after looking long at it.

"It doesn't do her justice," said the fond lover; "it's well done, I suppose, but she's heaps prettier

than that." He smiled a little. "When you meet her don't say anything about this. As a matter of fact I stole it. In fact it's rather difficult to explain, but she'll expect your name to be Vincent like mine. I was an ass to be ashamed to work except under an assumed name but it was forced upon me, as I'll tell you some day." He looked at the invalid anxiously. "You're looking tired. You mustn't stay any longer. I'll come up tomorrow evening after dinner and I'll bring her."

There were no happier brothers in New York that night than the Chesters. John, despite his added pain and the reproaches of his physician, who upbraided him bitterly for his rashness in venturing out, felt a peace that he had not known for years. And Richard, the impetuous, easily moved through sympathy, assured himself that from every point of view he was the luckiest man in creation.

He was chagrined to find that Norah was not free to go with him to his brother's hotel on Monday. She was dining out and the visit would have to be postponed. He reserved, therefore, his explanations, as better told face to face than over the telephone. She was glad to learn that his movements on the following day would de-

pend largely on the time of Mendoza's arrival. Of late she had been vaguely uneasy about her Brazilian agent. His excuses to avoid the northern trip did not seem genuine and his reports had grown less and less satisfactory. He had finally come only at her peremptory commands and she had grown to have so much confidence in Richard that she wanted his opinion of this man.

The Brazilian had not been half an hour at his hotel when Chester asked to see him. The bell boy did not even demand his card. "You're the gentleman he's expecting?" he asked carelessly.

"Yes," Chester returned promptly. Norah had prepared the way for him.

Mendoza was a handsome, portly man of middle age. He was well dressed and wore a long beard and abounded in gestures that were ample and expressive. He shook hands with the characteristic grace of his people. "I have been expecting you," he said. "In confidence, I should not have taken the journey for any other reason."

Chester thanked him and wondered why he seemed so obviously ill at ease. "I imagine," said Mendoza, "that very little explanation is necessary between us. Your reputation is known

to me thoroughly, and I am not unknown to you."

"I've heard nothing but good of you," said Chester, not to be outdone in politeness.

"I am exceedingly sorry to have to do this," said the other with an expressive shrug, "but as you know, self-protection is nature's first law."

"Whatever is the man talking about?" Chester asked himself. "I don't exactly follow you," he said.

"I am only thinking that my motives may be distorted," explained the South American. "But a man must think first of himself. You, sir, have that reputation."

"Who gave it to me?" Chester asked. Norah could not possibly have advised her business partner of her lover's selfishness.

"Men do not succeed as you have done otherwise," Mendoza remarked. "To continue, I am a man of the South with the love for gambling and cards, incomprehensible to you colder men of the North. I thought I had conquered it but a month ago at Rio I lost my all. Then it was that after refusing to treat with your agent I wrote you. You understand my predicament."

Chester put his hand to his head. What this

suave Brazilian was talking about was beyond him. "What do you tell me all this for?" he asked.

"I owe it to myself," the other said with a touch of theatricalism. "I made a verbal agreement with her not to dispose of my stock without her written consent. And as I know she has no money to buy me out I must accept your offer." He looked at Chester anxiously, frightened by his silence lest the deal for which he had come to New York was not to be consummated. "Surely, Mr. Renalls," he cried, "you are not going to fail me?"

Chester saw in a flash the whole traitorous business. The reputation the other had endowed him with belonged to the Renalls whom he was supposed to be, the man he was expecting.

"I do business in my own way," Chester said grimly, apprehensive that the real Renalls might appear. He seized a 'phone and demanded that a taxicab await him at the hotel entrance immediately. "We'll go right away to my lawyer," he said.

"But I have not breakfasted yet," Mendoza protested.

"Then you shall breakfast on gold."

The Brazilian submitted gracefully. Such curt answers were in keeping with Renalls' character and the sooner the business could be concluded the better. "Permit me to get my hat and coat," he said. He felt a certain admiration for the hustling ways of the man awaiting him in the next room, who called up two men and made appointments within the minute. One message went to John Chester. The other gladdened the ears of Wardour Enderby, who was told to lose no time in seeking the great hotel wherein the invalid was living. He replied that he would go as fast as his waiting car could bring him there. When Mendoza reappeared he decided that the manners of that eminent financier Charles Renalls had been maligned. He found a cheerful, courteous companion who took him to a suite of rooms so gorgeous that the exaggerated stories of the Renalls wealth appeared credible. He listened to Chester's explanation that he was pinched financially and was to transfer the whole of his stock for cash. "By the way," the supposed Renalls asked him, "what sum did we arrange upon?"

"One hundred and fifty thousand dollars," returned he, "and this, with your own holding, gives

you absolute control. I shall be sorry sometimes when I think of this," again the expressive shrug, "but a man must think of himself first."

"There's one matter I might explain," Chester said. "I am not Charles Renalls but Richard Chester. Keep still," he urged at the alarm appearing on the other's face, "it won't affect you. I have the cash and Mr. Enderby will arrange everything."

"I have been deceived," cried Mendoza.

Chester spoke temperately. His manner instantly reassured the other. "Accidentally I assure you," he said. "You assumed that I was Renalls and told me everything before I could stop you. If you want the money you can have it instantly. And there's another thing that would make you glad of the mistake. I am a friend of Miss Ellis and not an enemy. As a gentleman," Mendoza bowed, "you will be glad of that."

"Sir," he said grandiloquently, "it is enough. Between gentlemen, all is understood. I have explained that I need money and I would rather have yours than his." His eyes flashed. "He sent an agent to me who treated me as a dog." He looked from one to the other. "It must be

settled at once." Wardour Enderby rose from his seat. "It shall," he said. "My car is outside and we will seek your man of business instantly." Mendoza bowed with the perfection of courtesy.

"One moment, Mr. Mendoza," Chester asked. "I suppose what you said about Renalls having control was true?"

"Most certainly," Mendoza returned.

"And what was he going to do?"

"It was all explained to me," the South American answered airily. "He was going to plunge the concern into bankruptcy and then, I think your expressive phrase is, 'freeze out' the other shareholders." He bowed again jauntily and followed Enderby out of the room.

"I notice you didn't take his hand," said John Chester, looking at his brother keenly. "Why?"

"Because tomorrow I shall take a malacca cane and give him the darnedest licking he's ever heard of," Richard cried with flaming eyes. "John, he's the biggest traitor who ever lived. She forgave him once when he stole the mine money and played it away over the roulette wheel, and now in her hour of need she was to be sold to her enemy. I could hardly keep my hands off that oily black beard."

He lit a cigarette with fingers that trembled with passion and sat silent for a moment. Then he looked over at his brother and smiled. "By the way," he said, "you don't know what you've spent all that money for. I never thought of that. I was so savagely angry that I forgot that you don't know the first thing about it. You just shelled out a hundred and fifty thousand of your money —"

John interrupted him. "Our money," he corrected gently. "After Sunday night it was our money, Dick."

Richard sighed with satisfaction. "If you only knew how happy you've made me."

John looked at him with a whimsical smile. "If you'd only tell me what it's all about," he said, "I could share your happiness better." John listened to the long involved story with great interest. "It was the luckiest thing I ever heard of," he declared. "Renalls would have done what he liked with you, broken you, bankrupted you, laughed at you. I know his way of fighting. If you want to do me a good turn, Dick, you must let me come in on this mine." His eyes brightened; he had the Chester love of fighting. "It will do me good to straighten it out," he

chuckled. "I foresee a pretty little conflict with our friend Renalls. He holds on to things like a bulldog and he has no liking for me either. When do you see Miss Ellis again?"

"Thursday evening," returned the happy Richard. "She's at Lakewood with Mrs. Monmouth till then."

"Can't you persuade her to come in here and see her cantankerous, broken-down brother-in-law to be?" He asked it almost timidly.

Richard laughed to hide his emotion. "Do you think I'm going to let go of you any more?" he asked.

CHAPTER XXI

RENALLS' DEFEAT

"Hee that holds his sweet-hart true unto his day of dying,
Lives of all that ever breathed most worthy the envying."

—*Dr. Thomas Campion, 1617.*

RICHARD had made up his mind that on the Thursday evening he would have to tell Norah much that he had kept from her. The reconciliation with his brother would necessitate this and he had long felt it irksome to hold back so much.

He found her looking all the lovelier for her Lakewood visit. It was a cold April evening and there was an open fire of cedar logs blazing cheerily. From his pocket he took a long envelope containing the share transfer and put it on the mantelpiece.

"What is it?" she demanded.

"A wedding present," he answered her, "a package containing thwarted revenge, lover's luck and a happy issue out of all our trouble."

"Sometimes I think you're absolutely crazy," she laughed.

"Sometimes I am," he said. "I went hopelessly mad on Sunday evening and I'm going to tell you all about it. Sit down at my feet like an obedient child and I'll make a general and particular confession of my life — with one incident excepted — from infancy up to the present moment." It was a favorite attitude of the girl's to sit on a low ottoman or cushion at his feet while he sat in one of the great luxurious chairs.

"Now," she said, her hands clasping her knees, and gazing into the changing flames, "now I'm ready."

He kissed the tips of her little ears and the waving tendrils of hair. "The fire makes your hair all red gold," he said. "My dear, I am the happiest mortal who ever lived."

"Is that your confession?" she laughed.

"That's my boast," he retorted. "I shall now proceed to set forth the failures and successes of a career which has up to the present not been too well employed." He listened for a moment. "What's that?" The door was thrown open and a servant announced, "Mr. Charles Renalls." The financier had bought his way in.

"A very pretty picture," he observed. "Pray don't move."

Norah rose to her feet and looked at him interrogatively. "I thought you were not coming here again," she said stiffly.

"If you remember our talk in Jamaica," he returned, ignoring Chester, "you will not have forgotten that I promised to come —"

She interrupted him impatiently. "You made a number of stupid, veiled threats which have not been fulfilled."

"You think not?" he said. "Well, we'll talk of that later. How goes the stock?"

"I only got back from Lakewood an hour or so ago," she answered. "I have not seen my lawyers or brokers yet. Why?"

"I am interested," he returned. "I've come here to acknowledge my defeat."

"Your defeat?" she queried.

He nodded. "My defeat. Mendoza sold you to me and but for the fact of a stalled train on the subway I should have had the North Brazils Goldfield all my own by now. When I got to Mendoza's hotel he wasn't there. He's sold out to some other man. I know the man."

She looked at Chester in amazement and despair. Mendoza's sale would probably affect her success. "Do you think it's true?" she said.

He reached down the envelope from the mantel. "Open it," he said quietly, "and remember what I told you it contained."

She looked at the contents bewildered. She could see that an enormous number of shares had been transferred to her, an amount which with her present holding gave her undisputed control.

"What does it mean?" she asked helplessly.

"It's a wedding present," Chester said. "Mr. Renalls has assured you it is his thwarted revenge." He turned to the financier. "I really cannot see why you should come here, sir."

There were many explanations which he must instantly make to the girl and the presence of this black, scowling man was an affront.

"By what right do you say that?" the financier demanded.

"By the right of the man she is to marry," he returned steadily.

Renalls laughed aloud. "Oh, no!" he cried, "she won't marry you."

"Mr. Renalls," cried the girl imperiously, "you've long outworn your welcome; please go."

"So you're afraid at last, are you?" he sneered. "You know I should not come here to admit my

defeat if I hadn't some other purpose. I want you to remember whose daughter you are and send him away before it is too late. Remember what I told you about him! Well, I've found out other things too. He's posing under a false name even now. Ask him if he isn't."

She looked at him with increasing amazement. His manoeuvres seemed so hopelessly clumsy, so obviously the jealous ravings of a beaten man. She was forced to entertain doubts as to his sanity.

"He's been lying to you all along, Norah," he cried, "he's been posing to you as a single man. Norah, he's married and I've got the proofs of it."

There had never in all the course of her life come to her such an accession of anger. She faced him white-faced. "How I loathe you," she cried, "how I hate you!"

"Ask him," Renalls said doggedly. "All I want, is for you to force him to speak. Do you think I should be such a fool as to come in here without any evidence? At least give me credit for some sense. I tell you he is a married man posing to you as single. Ask him why he waits till you're nearly down and out before stepping

in and making you such a present. Isn't there any instinct to warn you against men like that? Norah, he belongs to one of the wealthiest families in the country and there isn't a wish he couldn't gratify."

She pointed to the door, "Must I have you thrown out?"

Renalls spoke in a quieter tone. "I said when you were in the dust I would come for you. You're in the dust now, Norah. You've lost more than money, you've lost faith in the man you loved. I'm waiting for you, my dear."

She looked at him with a scorn that hurt. "As if you could love!" she said.

"Be fair," he pleaded. "Be fair to me as well as yourself. Ask him."

She turned her back upon Renalls and walked to Chester's side and put her hands on his shoulder and looked into his face with eyes of trust and love. "Dear," she asked slowly, "tell him. Are you a married man?"

Chester was filled with poignant emotion. There must come to her a moment of suffering before she could know the truth. What had to be revealed must not take place before the intruder.

"Yes," he made answer, "I am."

"Is this the time to jest?" she said, half in reproach.

"It's dead earnest," exclaimed the financier. "He has sense enough to see the game is up." He looked at the girl in pity. "I wish I could have spared you this."

She held her hands to her heart. Slowly it was borne in upon her that her enemy was right and she was indeed in the dust, broken and without hope. She turned slowly to Renalls. "There are things I must say to him which I do not want you to hear. Please go. Isn't it enough to know that my heart is broken?"

When he had closed the door softly behind him, she sank in a chair and covered her face with her white hands. She could not bear to look Richard in the eyes yet. Although in this bitter hour she knew that she still loved him she knew this monstrous deception must part them eternally. She did not see the love and trust in his face, the steadfast light which would have warned her that she was the victim of a misunderstanding.

Presently she was more mistress of herself and looked at him wearily. If only there might be some trivial circumstances which would allow

her in the dark years to believe that he had in reality loved her.

“Haven’t you anything to say?” she asked, dully.

“Is love so blind?” he said, softly.

She looked at him with beating heart. “What do you mean?” she cried. From his pocket he took a gold oval frame from which her painted face stared back at her.

She looked at it a moment blankly and then some blessed consciousness stirred in her and unravelled the twisted skeins and made plain what seemed so bewildering, and she knew that here was her husband.

THE END.

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